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ABSTRACT

This report discusses a program to increase student self-esteem in order to improve student reading achievement. The targeted population consisted of students in grades first, second, and third. The study took place in the northwestern suburbs of a large metropolitan area in Illinois. The problems of low self-esteem and low reading achievement were documented through data revealing student reading attitudes and self-concepts through parent surveys, student questionnaires, student records, student journal entries, teacher checklists, anecdotal records and diagnostic measures. Analysis of probable cause data revealed that students' poor reading achievement was due to lack of self-esteem brought on by family, school, society, and peers. A review of the research indicated that a self-esteem curriculum may have an impact on reading achievement. A review of solution strategies suggested by the research combined with an analysis of the problem setting resulted in the selection of four major categories of intervention: celebrating the self, the family, friends, and team-building. Post intervention data indicated no relevant correlation between self-esteem and reading achievement. Contains 33 references and 16 figures of data. Appendixes contain a student attitude survey and scoring guide; reading assessment materials; a self-concept scale; a parent observation guide; and a list of self-esteem affirmation and journal statements. (Author/SR)

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IMPROVING STUDENTS' READING ACHIEVEMENT THROUGH THE USE OF SELF-ESTEEM LESSONS

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An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the School of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

Saint Xavier University & IRI/Skylight

Field-Based Masters Program

Palatine, Illinois

April, 1999

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DEDICATION

This paper is dedicated to my best friend and husband, Tim, for his encouragement and support in helping me accomplish a lifelong goal. - R.C.

This is dedicated to my parents, who have supported my efforts with love and the greatest of understanding, and to my children, Jake and Kimberleigh, for delighting my days. - S.H.

I dedicate this paper to my husband, Randy, the Graphman, who hung in there with me and gave me the encouragement I needed to get through it all. - J.W.

ABSTRACT

This report discusses a program to increase student self-esteem in order to improve student reading achievement. The targeted population consisted of students in grades first, second, and third. The study took place in the northwestern suburbs of a large metropolitan area in Illinois. The problems of low self-esteem and low reading achievement were documented through data revealing student reading attitudes and self-concepts through parent surveys, student questionnaires, student records, student journal entries, teacher checklists, anecdotal records and diagnostic measures.

Analysis of probable cause data revealed that students' poor reading achievement was due to lack of self-esteem brought on by family, school, society, and peers. A review of the research indicated that a self-esteem curriculum may have an impact on reading achievement.

A review of solution strategies suggested by the research combined with an analysis of the problem setting resulted in the selection of four major categories of intervention: celebrating the self, the family, friends, and team-building.

Post intervention data indicated no relevant correlation between self-esteem and reading achievement.

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CHAPTER ONE

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of Problem

This study investigated the correlation between self-esteem and reading achievement. The targeted groups are first, second, and third graders. The correlation of self-esteem and reading achievement is shown through questionnaires to parents, diagnostic measurements, and selected classroom assessments.

Immediate Problem Context School A

School A is located in an elementary district with grades K-5 in attendance. A total of 382 students: 89% Caucasian, 1.6% African American, 3.1% Hispanic, and 6.3% Asian or Pacific Islander, are enrolled in School A. Students from families receiving public aid, being supported in foster homes with public funds, or eligible to receive free or reduced price lunches are 1.3% of the school's population. Five and a half percent of the students were eligible for bilingual educational services. School A boasts a 96.59% attendance rate with chronic truancy being non-existent. Student mobility rate is at 9.0%.

The 109 teachers in the entire district, including classroom teachers and specialty personnel, are all Caucasian; 86.2% are female and 13.8% are male. School A has 28 teachers. Ninety-three percent are female and 7% are male. The mean number of years of teaching experience is 12.6 years. Forty-five and seven tenths percent of the teachers have Bachelor's Degrees and 54.3% have

Master's Degrees or beyond. The average teacher's salary is $43,321. The administrator's average salary is $87,325 in School A.

Within the district there are four schools. The average class size is 23.5 students. School A houses kindergarten through fifth grade children. There are three other buildings; one houses primary grades kindergarten through second, one houses intermediate grades of third through fifth, and the third is the middle school which houses grades six through eight.

Based on 1995-96 data in the school report card, School A spends $6,621 per pupil. This is $463 more than the state average. Fifty-nine and seventh tenths percent of the district's expenditure is spent from the education fund. Large proportions (19.5%) of the monies are spent on operations and maintenance funds.

School A was built in 1968. Several additions have been added to the original structure. The local library and the park district are within walking distance of the school grounds. Children frequently take field trips to both of these facilities.

School A has a major commitment to improve technology and has a computer lab with 28 Macintosh computers. Every classroom has a minimum of one computer and printer in it. The three fifth-grade classrooms have two computers. Currently, only the principal's computer and one library computer have Internet capabilities. School A is in the process of acquiring greater Internet accessibility.

The school improvement plan states School A will initiate the next approved phase of instruction using technology. This would include the establishment of computer networks and expanded use of

the Internet and classroom-based computers.

Various educational services and programs are currently being used at School A. Grades one through eight participate in D.A.R.E., a program to educate children about drugs, alcohol, and making wise decisions while building confidence to shun peer pressure. Grades kindergarten through five also have the option of participating in the Summer Reading Program and the Accelerated Reading Program. These offer opportunities to extend reading skills and emphasize the joy of reading outside of the school environment.

School A receives grant monies for their Chapter 1 services. Chapter 1 provides reading assistance to at-risk children in the first, second and third grades. A learning disability/behavior disorder teacher is employed full-time, servicing 15 students for an average of 200 minutes per week. The learning and behavioral disabilities teacher works with the classroom teacher both within the classroom and on a pullout basis to assist students with special needs. A full-time gifted education teacher works with students who have been identified through IGAP testing and teacher recommendation. This "pullout" service provides gifted students with enriched activities to supplement their classroom learning. In addition to fulfilling the academic needs of students, a social worker is available. Transitional Program of Instruction services are available for students meeting the state criteria. A TPI state-certified teacher is employed on a full time basis to work individually with students or within the classroom as needed. Currently, the TPI teacher works individually with 19 students on an average of 75 minutes per week. A part-time speech teacher is also available for students with speech word retrieval

difficulties. The speech teacher sees 20 students for an average of 40 minutes per week. Additional special services include a full-time physical education teacher. Children in grades one through five partake in physical education three times per week for 30-minute sessions. The kindergarten children have physical education classes once a week for 30 minutes. Within the week, all students in grades kindergarten through five participate in a 40-minute music class and a 40-minute art class. Both music and art class are taught by educators with degrees in their respective fields.

Within the last two to three years, parents have become increasingly concerned about spelling. Responding to this growing concern, the Board of Education agreed to adopt a new spelling program that was implemented in the fall of 1997. School A believes in a balanced reading program, using phonetic, basal, and whole language approaches. Houghton-Mifflin basal program is the adopted curriculum base. Students are in a multi age classroom with reading groups based on readiness rather than age level. Modern Curriculum Press was accepted as School A's phonics program. School A utilizes trade books, big books, word walls and print rich environment. There is no existing self-esteem program in place at School A.

School A staff development workshops have focused on spelling and the engaged learning process. Staff is encouraged to attend other conferences and classes regarding these topics as well as technology.

The Surrounding Community School A

Located in a fairly prosperous suburb northwest of a large midwestern city, School A's community is fairly small with a total population of 10,239. The community is adjacent to much larger suburbs Children from four surrounding suburbs also attend School A.

The average income per household in School A's district is $48,851. This upper-middle income community boasts an average home price of $215,570. Housing prices range from $60,000 for the less expensive condominiums to $500,000 for a higher priced single-family home. Crime is extremely low in the School A community with a crime ratio of 2.552%.

Immediate Problem Context School B

School B is part of a unit district that covers an area of 116 square miles. School B is one of the 11 kindergarten through fifth grade schools in the district. This school is set in a suburban neighborhood. A total of 658 students: 95.7% Caucasian, 0.8% African-American, 2.1% Hispanic, and 1.4% Asian are in enrolled in School B. A small percentage of students, 4.0%, come from low-income families. These students receive public aid, live in institutions for neglected or delinquent children, are supported in foster homes with public funds, or have eligibility to receive free or reduced-price lunches. The attendance rate for School B is 96.0% and there is a mobility rate of 10.0%. The average class size is 27 students.

There is a total of 803 full-time teachers in the district: 96.8% Caucasian, 0.5% African-American, 2.5% Hispanic, 0.1% Asian, and 0.1% Native American. Of the 803 teachers, 25.8% are male and 74.2% are female. There are 29 teachers in School B; twenty-two general education teachers, one physical education teacher, one music teacher, one gifted education teacher, two learning disabilities teachers, one learning and behavioral disabilities teacher, and one half-time reading support teacher. The average years of teaching experience for School B is thirteen years. The percentage of teachers with a Bachelor's degree is 46.7. The percentage of teachers that hold a Master's degree is 53.3. The average salary of these 803 teachers is $41,866.

According to the 1995-1996 expenditure of funds, based on the 1995-1996 school report card, the district operating expenditure per pupil is $4,875. The district spends 58.7% of their funds from the education fund. Four and five tenths percent is spent in the transportation fund. In all spending areas, the district spends lower than the state average.

School B is a site-based managed building. The school improvement team, consisting of parents, teachers, and administrators, spend a great deal of energy. They focus on the lack of available physical space at School B. School B is running out of space to house resource teachers and certified support staff. The special education program at School B is not 100% inclusion, therefore; they need to have space to conduct self-contained classrooms. The school is also focusing on adopting a new social studies series and aligning their curriculum and assessment to the new standards.

School B has hired a half-time teacher since the 1995-1996 school year. This teacher focuses on reading support for the primary grade levels. School B has a strong Parent- Teacher Organization. They organized two reading programs that motivate students to do daily reading. Also, they have held many successful fund raisers that have provided the students with new playground equipment and the teachers with printers in their classrooms. Another focus of the School B's school improvement plan is to keep current with technology.

School B teachers currently use a combination of Houghton-Mifflin reading series and teacher made literatures units. Houghton-Mifflin focuses on reading skills and also incorporates writing skills through a variety of journal activities. There is currently no self-esteem program in place.

The Surrounding Community School B

School B is located in a suburban area that has been experiencing rapid population growth rates over the last several decades. This growth is due to an influx of new housing developments and the turnover of existing homes from older residents to younger families with children. The population, according to the 1996 census, is 19,007.

School B's community covers an 8.9 square mile area. This community is 47 miles northwest of a large midwestern city. There is convenient access to an expressway.

The average home sale price for School B's community is $160,000. Of the total amount of housing units, 465 are renter occupied and 6,333 housing units are owner occupied. The average age in this community is 32.5 years of age.

Immediate Problem Context School C

School C is a neighborhood school with a total enrollment of 447 students of which 87.5% of the school's population is classified as white. The school has a black population of 0.2%, a Hispanic population of 2.0%, and an Asian/Pacific Islander population of 10.3%. School C houses kindergarten through fourth grade students. A small number of students enrolled at School C, 0.4%, come from families that receive public aid, live in foster homes, or are eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunches. In addition, 11.4% of the students in School C have been found to be eligible for bilingual education. School C has an attendance rate of 95.9%, a student mobility rate of 3.0%, and a 0.0% chronic truancy rate.

The average class size in a kindergarten classroom is 28.3 students, in a first grade classroom 23 students, and in a third grade classroom 23.5 students. The district consists of six elementary schools, one middle school, and one junior high school.

The staff of School C consists of 18 regular classroom teachers and nine support specialists including one and a half physical education teachers, one art teacher, one music teacher, one computer teacher, one librarian, and one and a half learning disabilities teachers. Other staff members included eight special education teachers and paraprofessionals, one administrator, one nurse, one social worker, a support staff of three, and a kitchen crew of two. The classroom teachers have an average of 13.7 years of teaching experience. Teachers with a bachelor's degree account for 30.5% of the faculty, with the remaining 69.5% having a Master's degree or above. Ninety-seven and six tenths percent of the faculty is Caucasian, 0.5% Black, and 1.9% Asian/Pacific

Islander. Sixteen percent of the faculty is male, and 84% is female. The teachers' average salary is $47,698, and the average administrator's salary is $88,114.

Based on the 1995-1996 data in the school report card, the operating expenditure per pupil in School C is $6542. The district spends $17,875,966, or 72.2% from the education fund. This is 3.2% less than the state average. The district spends 16.4% on operations and maintenance.

The school is located in a middle to upper class northeastern suburb of a large midwestern city. It has 23 regular classrooms and nine special purpose rooms which include the following: an art room, a music room, a gym, a brand new learning resource center and computer lab, a teacher work room, a cafeteria, an intergenerational room, and an auditorium with a stage. The grounds include a large blacktop area, a baseball field, and two playgrounds.

A number of programs are available to the students. Academic programs include: language arts, math, physical education and health, biological and physical sciences, social science, fine arts, computers, and English as a Second Language (ESL). Two full time reading paraprofessionals work with students who display a need for additional reading instruction. During the 1997-1998 school year, School C piloted a Reading Discovery program with parent volunteers who provided additional reading intervention for students in grade one. School C participates in a regional network, the Northern Suburban Special Education District (NSSED), and houses two preschool special education classrooms. Students at the elementary level attend physical education five days a week for 19 minutes, art for 45 minutes a week, music twice a week for

25 minutes, computers for 35 minutes a week, and resource center for 30 minutes a week.

In addition, School C is in the process of integrating technology in the classrooms. The school was wired for Internet access in November 1997, and each classroom contains one computer. Currently, the district has two committees actively reassessing the science and math curriculum at a district-wide level. Also, during the summer months, a Summer Enrichment Program is available to students for additional educational experiences.

School C's reading program consists of teacher made materials, various types of literature, and MacMillan reading series. Teachers enrich students' reading skills through a literature-based and print rich environment. Various trade books, mini-lessons, small and whole group instructional techniques, and word wall activities are used to enhance learning. There is no established self-esteem program in the district.

The Surrounding Community School C

School C is located 15 miles north of a large midwestern city. It is one of the most desirable residential communities in the suburban metropolitan area. The average family income is $81,568 and the average home value is $280,800. The year-round beauty of the lake and trees, various shopping districts, and reputable schools, make the community an outstanding place to live. The village encompasses 5.4 square miles with a population of about 27,000. Direct rail, rapid transit, and bus service allow residents to enjoy the area's limitless cultural, business, retail, and educational opportunities. Other amenities include an extensive parks and recreation program for children and adults.

In addition, the public library is highly utilized and comprehensive.

Given the advanced academic credentials of its residents, quality education is strongly supported. Local property taxes account for almost 80 percent of the district's funding, with the remaining coming from federal and state resources. To augment revenues, citizens recently established a non-profit Educational Foundation. Governed by an independent Board of Trustees, the foundation's continuing mission is to expand, enrich, and complement educational opportunities for the students, staff, and community.

Regional and National Context of Problem

The problem of student's self-esteem in conjunction with academic performance has generated concern at the national level. Numerous resources including books, research articles, programs, and workshops have been devoted to this issue.

According to Canfield (as cited in Borba, 1989), self-esteem is the major missing link in the educational reform in America today. Students need to expand their self-esteem, increase their interpersonal communication skills, and learn the affective and behavioral skills necessary for creating success in all areas of their lives. To promote self-esteem, teachers are incorporating cooperative learning within their classrooms to promote these life skills.

Even though emphasis on improving self-esteem is a major focus in many educational arenas, some critics feel that the focus on self-esteem is just another attempt at a panacea and that it may even detract from more pressing needs (Amundson, 1991).

There are many definitions of self-esteem. Experts agree that

self-esteem is a combination of self-respect and self-confidence. Self-esteem is comprised of four key components: capabilities, significance, sense of power, and worth (Coopersmith, 1967). Parents, teachers, community, and society as a whole, play a crucial role in developing each of these components. Students must forever be held to high standards-academically and behaviorally-and then given all of the encouragement and assistance possible to meet those standards. That assures high self-esteem. If the student is praised and rewarded for effort as well as achievement, the effort will lead to success (Canfield and Wells, 1994).

There is a strong relationship between self-concept to the learning of subject matter. Research literature significantly indicates that cognitive learning increases when self-concept increases (Canfield and Wells, 1994). Researchers have stressed that students with increased self-esteem, are more achievement-oriented. Students with a high self-esteem are able to make better decisions for themselves, and therefore; they are more successful in school. This is consistent with the research done by Wattenberg and Clifford,(1962) who focused on kindergartners, to see if self-concept was predictive of reading success.

Self-esteem, which is a key factor in improving student behavior and academic achievement, can no longer be ignored in education. At present too many students exist in the shadows. Borba states that their potential and capabilities will never shine because students are clouded by self-doubt or by lack of self-worth. This affects all aspects of their being. Low self-esteem has been cited over and over again as a key factor in behavior problems as well as poor academic performance (Borba, 1989).

CHAPTER TWO

Probable Causes

There is considerable research regarding poor reading achievement in correlation to low self-esteem. A review of the literature has been broken down into five categories including family, school, self, society and peers. Confirmation of these probable causes was found at the targeted schools.

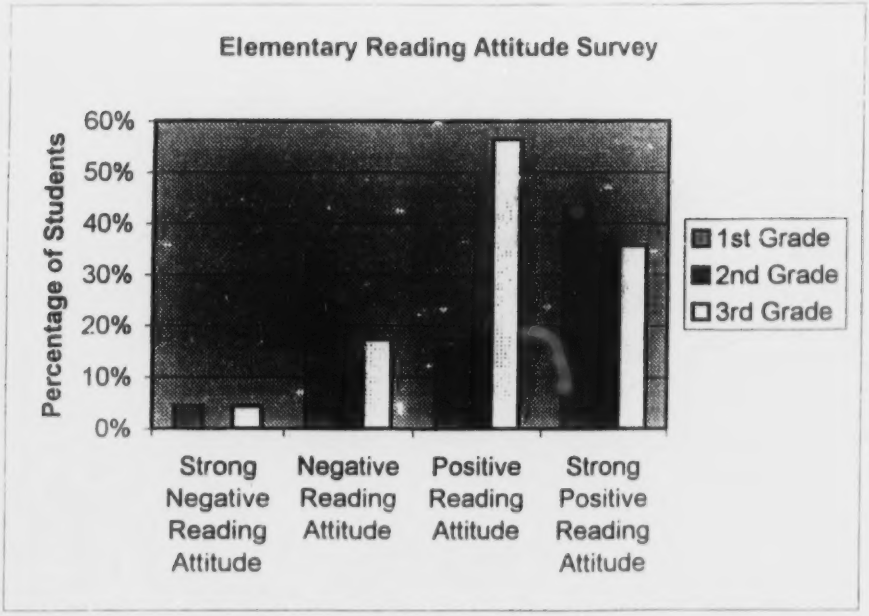
Data Collection

The data collected instruments in this study consisted of The Elementary Reading Attitude Survey, created by Michael C. McKenna and Dennis J. Kear, (Appendix A), a teacher- made First Grade Reading Assessment, (Appendix B), The Brigance Basic Skills Reading Comprehension Test (Appendix C), a teacher-created Self-Concept Scale, (Appendix D), and an Observation Guide For Parents created by R. Anthony, T. Johnson, N. Mickelson, and A. Preece, (Appendix E). These data sources gave the researchers a baseline for interpreting how the implementation of self-esteem lessons correlated with reading achievement.

The Elementary Reading Attitude Survey revealed children's feelings towards reading, both recreational reading, and the academic aspects of reading. This was given to first, second, and third grade students in the targeted classrooms. Results indicated that the majority of first and second graders have a strong positive reading attitude. It was interesting to note that the third grade students surveyed had a positive reading attitude; however, the average was not as strong as the lower grades. See Figure 1.

See Figure 1.

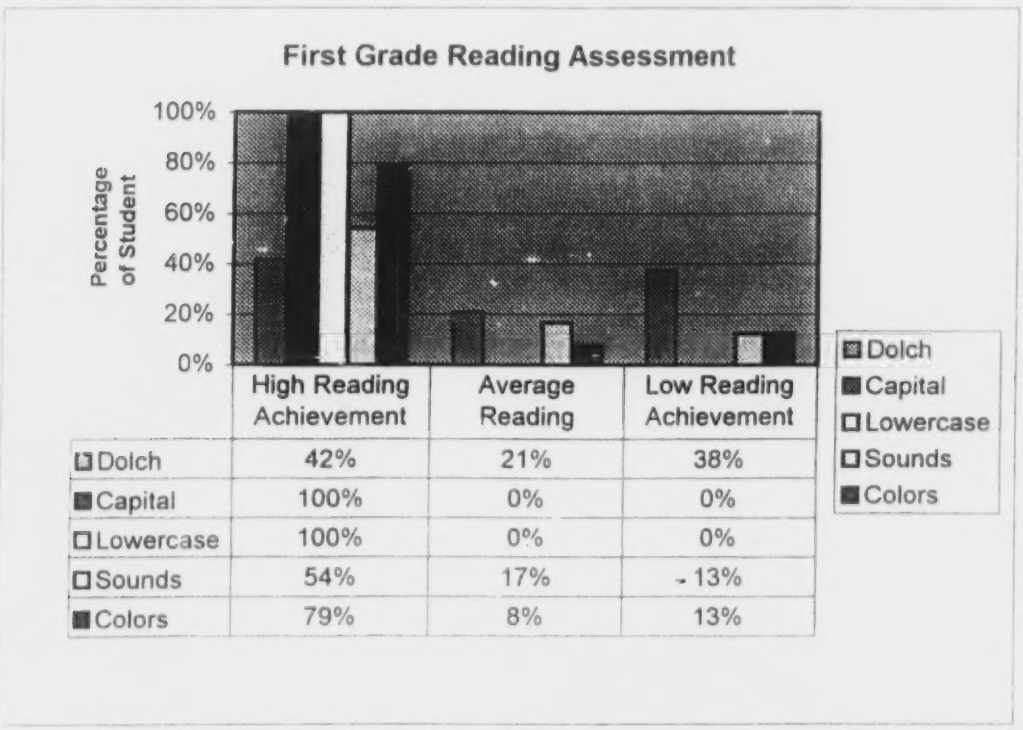
Figure 1



The First Grade Reading Assessment was a teacher-created tool used to assess first graders' knowledge of 41 Dolch words, 26 capital and lowercase letters, letter-sound correspondence of initial consonants, and 9 color words. The total number of points in each subtest was divided into thirds. Students who scored in the top third were designated high readers, students who scored in the middle third were designated average readers, and students who scored in the bottom third were designated low achievement readers. For example students who correctly identified 0-14 Dolch words were low achievement readers for that particular subtest; students who identified 15-28 Dolch words were average readers, and those who could identify 29-41 Dolch words were high achievement readers. These preset intervals were used to indicate the level of student reading performance. Each student's subscores were added together for an individual total reading score of 123

points which could be used for overall comparisons. Thirty-eight percent of first graders scored at the low reading achievement level when identifying Dolch words. There was a wide range of reading achievement noted on the Dolch word test category. On the other hand, all children displayed high reading achievement when recognizing all of their capital and lowercase letters. In addition, a small number of the first graders scored at the low reading achievement level when identifying their sounds and color words. See Figure 2 for details.

Figure 2

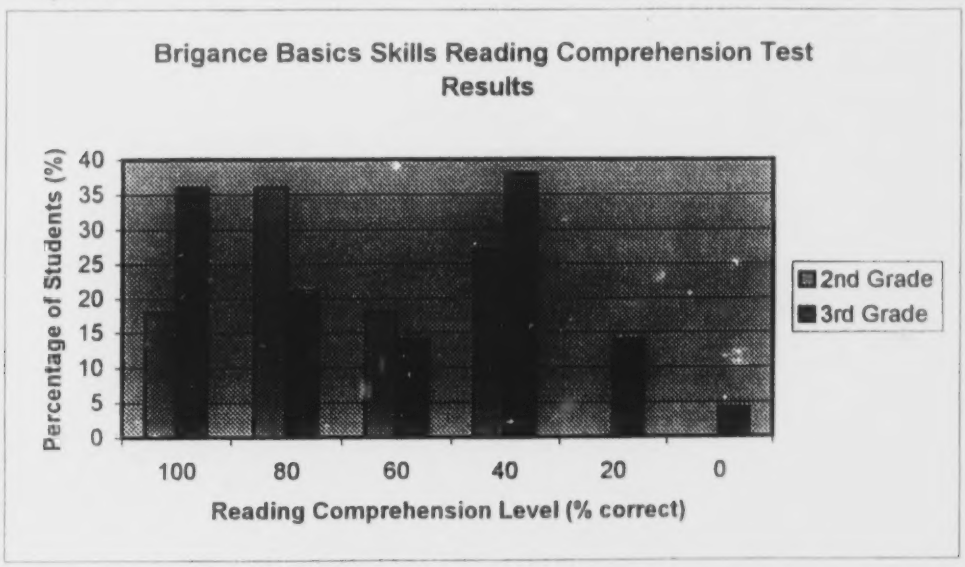


	High Reading Achievement	Average Reading	Low Reading Achievement
Dolch	42%	21%	38%
Capital	100%	0%	0%
Lowercase	100%	0%	0%
Sounds	54%	17%	13%
Colors	79%	8%	13%

The second and third graders in this study took a section of the Brigance Basic Skills Reading Comprehension Test to test their reading comprehension level. The students read a short passage and answered five multiple-choice comprehension questions. Second graders were administered the lower second grade level version of

this test. Scores ranged from 40% to 100% comprehension levels. The recommended range was from 80% to 100% for proficient readers. The third graders were given the lower third grade level version of this test. The results ranged from 0% to 100%, with 38% of the students reading at the 40% comprehension level. This shows the need for improvement in reading achievement. See Figure 3.

Figure 3



The teacher-created Self-Concept Scale consisted of 18 questions that asked students how they felt about family, peers, academics, and self. The children answered the questions with either a yes or no response. The researchers scored this test by adding the number of positive responses in each category, and dividing that number by the total amount of questions in that category. The range between the highest and lowest scores was 21. The researchers devised the self-esteem scale by using intervals of 7. Most of the children have average to high levels of self-esteem. However, some first, second, and third graders show a lower self-concept about their peer relationships compared to the

other categories. The first graders felt best about their families. In addition, the second and third graders felt best about themselves. See Figure 4 for more information.

Figure 4: Self - Concept Scale Results

Category	First Grade	Second Grade	Third Grade
Peers	82%	54%	44%
Family	94%	88%	85%
Self	92%	93%	87%
Academic	91%	85%	85%

Percentage of Positive Self Concept Responses.

Self Esteem Scale	
Low Self Esteem	72 - 79 %
Average Self Esteem	80 - 87 %
High Self Esteem	88 - 95 %

The parent observation tool was given to all the first, second and third grade parents to complete. The researchers felt that parents gave honest answers regarding their child's learning capabilities as a reader. Parents across all grade levels, felt that their children did not voluntarily try out new words or forms of writing. Ninety-four percent of first grade parents believed their children did not understand books read to them. Another noticeable observation by the researchers was that half of the second grade parents felt that their children did not choose to write. See Figure 5 for more information.

Figure 5: Parent Observation Checklist Results

Question Type		First Grade Negative Responses	Second Grade Negative Responses	Third Grade Negative Responses
Category	Reading Motivation	23%	6%	12%
	Reading Strategies	57%	11%	20%
	Writing Motivation	30%	28%	38%

Percentage of Parent Responses at Each Grade Level.

In order to see relationships between student self-esteem and student reading achievement, researchers created a self-esteem and reading achievement score for each child. Researchers combined test scores of the Reading Attitude Survey and the teacher-created Self-Concept Scale in order to form the self-esteem score. For the reading score, they simply used the results of each grade-level test. Surprisingly, most children exhibited fairly high self-esteem scores regardless of their reading scores. However, there was a pattern of low self-esteem in relation to reading scores in several children. Looking at each of the grade level results, there was a greater correlation of low self-esteem and low reading achievement at the third-grade level than at the first and second grades. The researchers speculated that the older the children became, the more their self-esteem affected their reading achievement. See Figures 6, 7, & 8.

Figure 6

First Grade Reading Score vs. Positive Self-Esteem Score

Student	Reading Score	Self-Esteem Score
1.1	98	100
1.5	95	100
1.13	64	94
1.6	88	91
1.8	74	93
1.4	96	88
1.18	100	84
1.7	88	85
1.2	97	92
1.15	43	75
1.11	60	90
1.3	92	77
1.16	49	94
1.12	53	90
1.10	79	73
1.21	99	71
1.20	79	73
1.14	44	85
1.9	81	66
1.22	100	73
1.17	58	55
1.19	82	66
Average	78	83

Figure 7

Second Grade Reading Score vs. Positive Self-Esteem Score

Student	Reading Score	Self-Esteem Score
2.6	80	98
2.2	80	96
2.10	100	94
2.1	40	94
2.8	60	92
2.7	60	85
2.9	40	84
2.5	100	82
2.3	80	81
2.4	40	77
2.11	80	64
Average	69	86

Figure 8

Third Grade Reading Score vs. Positive Self-Esteem Score

Student	Reading Score	Self-Esteem Score
3.24	80	100
3.21	60	100
3.26	80	97
3.6	20	97
3.1	100	95
3.20	100	94
3.12	100	94
3.9	80	94
3.15	60	94
3.10	60	94
3.8	0	93
3.25	100	90
3.17	100	89
3.7	80	89
3.16	100	84
3.19	100	83
3.14	100	82
3.27	40	82
3.11	100	80
3.4	20	80
3.2	100	78
3.23	40	73
3.5	80	70
3.18	60	66
3.22	20	64
3.3	80	63
3.28	40	51
3.13	20	43
Average	69	83

Site Based Probable Causes

Some children in the targeted schools, especially in third grade, exhibit both low self-esteem and low reading achievement. As found in the targeted schools, as well as throughout the nation, many students do not always interact with their peers in a positive manner. No matter what sense of self a child has prior to school, he/she can experience the shifting of loyalties towards friendships. This occurred in all three targeted schools. Once students come to school, new experiences lead to a change in their self-esteem. Targeted children come into school with varying levels of support at home and varying levels of reading skills. Also, parental involvement differs, and is a major contributor to both reading skills and self-concept. This was evident by noting that twenty-five percent of parent surveys were not returned to school despite teacher request.

In the targeted schools, the self-esteem programs vary from teacher to teacher, and from school to school. For example, some teachers make sure to include a self-esteem program whereas others do not sense the need. The Rainbows program, an established self-esteem program taught to children involved in divorce and death within their family, is only offered in two out of the three schools in the study. In addition, often personal relationships and self-esteem programs get pushed out of the way, due to time, and curriculum considerations. Reading curriculum is also taught with the use of various strategies from teacher to teacher and school to school.

Probable Causes Found in the Literature

When looking at school success, often times the family structure has a great influence on a child's achievement and his self-esteem. According to Wlodkowski and Jaynes (1990), effective families have a set of easy-to-identify parenting styles. These cut across family income, education, and ethnic background. They remain true for single- and two parent households and for families with working and non-working mothers. Effective families display a number of positive attitudes and behaviors towards their children which help them to succeed in school and life.

The parenting style adults use with children can determine the amount of self-esteem the children possess. Research has shown that there are three basic parenting styles: authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive. Each style affects children and their self-esteem. Authoritarian parents tend to produce children who are more withdrawn, anxious, mistrustful, and discontented. These children are often overlooked by their peers. Their self-

esteem is often low. Permissive parents tend to produce children who are more immature and dependent. Their self-esteem is often unrealistic (Phelan, 1996). The most successful parenting style that fosters self-esteem is one in which parents have a healthy balance of set guidelines and follow-through, with opportunities in which children have a voice in making decisions within those established limits.

Additional research indicates that the way parents respond to their children's experiences has a pertinent effect on their children's self-esteem. Children are especially vulnerable to the responses they get from their parents (particularly mothers) because of the amount of time spent with them and their total dependence on them. This shows how vitally important early childhood experiences are in forming the kind of persons we become (Canfield, 1994).

The overall value parents have on education not only influences children's self-esteem, but also their school performance. Studies indicate that Japanese mothers and their children emphasize effort more than ability, compared to American mothers and their children, as a primary means to strong school performance (Wlodkowski and Jaynes, 1990).

Schools have a direct impact on both student self-esteem and achievement. The classroom environment, the teacher, and the curriculum all play a vital role.

According to Canfield (1994), classrooms need to create an open and caring environment of mutual support. Students must recognize that they are valued and will receive affection and support. Without the critical environmental dimensions of trust, caring, and openness, the teacher's efforts to enhance pupils'

sense of self-esteem will be seriously limited.

Teachers can make an enormous difference in the way their students learn and feel about themselves. "Teachers can and do affect pupils' self-concepts every day. They have a choice over what kind of effect they will have." (Canfield, 1994, p.4). Research by Walz (1992), found that changing a student's feelings about how well he/she can learn, will have a direct effect on how well he/she does learn.

How much time on task is wasted as a result of students' low self-esteem? Bean (1992) states that many children with low self-esteem are persistently distracted by the need to elicit emotional support from others (including the teacher) in order to reduce anxiety, loneliness or alienation. The time spent doing this eats dramatically into learning activities. In order to improve students' reading achievement, perhaps a change in behavior is necessary. The prime motivation for all behavior is to increase or maintain self-esteem (Canfield, 1994, p.3).

William Holly, (as cited in Walz, 1992, p. 1) states,

> Nevertheless, although self-esteem does not cause academic success, there is ample reason to believe that it can contribute to it in three ways. First of all, feeling worthless can lead to depression and depression can inhibit success. Secondly, fea of failure can hold students back; self confidence leads to risk taking. Lastly, constant failure and feelings of incompetence tend to discourage so students don't even try. Therefore, children's willingness to learn is a powerful component of success.

Students themselves determine how well they perform and feel about themselves by their willingness to learn, their behavior,

and their preconceived self-concepts based on previous experiences. A child's self-concept can be a positive or negative influence to school success. Self-concept builds the same way muscles do, slowly and often, at first, imperceptibly. One's general self-esteem affects effort, which, in turn, affects success. It must be remembered that self-esteem is a by-product of accomplishment. Success breeds success. Students must forever be held to high standards-academically and behaviorally- and given all the encouragement and assistance possible to meet those standards (Canfield, 1994,).

Hocko (1993) stated that if a child perceives his teacher's feelings and expectations as negative, the student's own self-perceptions take on a negative view. This emphasizes the need to continually be aware of the fragility of students' self-concepts. Walz (1992), stated what motivates students to achieve is the desire to preserve the self-esteem they already possess and to acquire more. Students can be caught in a bind between ardently desiring more success and just as ardently fearing failure.

Upon entering school for the first time, students' self-concepts are challenged by new experiences. Research by Phelan (1996), indicates that about the time children enter first grade, reality strikes its first sizable blow. Research shows that for most children self-esteem drops significantly when they enter first grade. Because of their amazing adaptability and enthusiasm, however, this setback is not disastrous. Once the children enter school their self-esteem is more under their own control, but it must be earned by socially valued tasks: academic performance, getting along with others, physical activities and appropriate behavior.

Many schools lack the curriculum needed to enhance self-esteem. Borba (1989), states that self-esteem courses are the major missing link in the educational reform in America today. With over 30% of our youth educationally at-risk, the stakes are too high. We must act now, using the research we have to develop self-esteem programs in all schools. A person's self-esteem can be changed. Low self-esteem can be changed by implementing programs that focus on developing healthy self-esteem (Richardson and Rayder, 1992,).

The self-esteem a child feels can influence his/her reading success. If the goal of the elementary reading instruction is that every student realize his/her potential, then the concept of self-esteem plays a vital role in the development and enhancement of the reading program (Hocko, 1993, p.1). By modifying what poor readers say to themselves about their performance, we may potentially effect increases in their motivation, persistence, and expectations of success in their reading (Hocko, 1993, p.25). Research by Borba (1989), shows that too many students exist in the shadows- their potential and capabilities will never shine because students are clouded by self-doubt or by lack of self-worth.

All schools have some form of tracking, unicultural curriculum, and competition. Beane (1991), believes that these policies can weaken self-esteem and that they should be removed from the schools. He suggested that these policies should be replaced with programs that place a high emphasis on authentic participation, collaborative action, interdependent diversity and a problem-centered curriculum in order to fully enhance self-esteem.

"Many studies have shown that the relationship between self-esteem and academic success is rather weak. Instead, it might be more realistic to think that ability and effort expended on schoolwork produce academic performance. Academic performance, in turn, especially early on in a child's school career, helps determine academic self-esteem."(Phelan, 1996, p.84). On the other hand, the researchers agree with Richardson and Rayder,(as cited in Walz,1992), who indicated change in a student's feelings about how well he can learn will have a clear effect on how well he will learn!

Nationally, the student of the '80s and '90s is a unique educational challenge because the economic and social factors of today contributes to a different student. (Branden, et al., 1989). Some of the issues in today's society that contribute to or result from the lowering of self-esteem include broken homes, lack of quality child care, drugs, sex, poverty, dropouts, and suicide. Walz (1992) states that school dropout rates have a lot to do with children's self-esteem just as does school performance. According to Wlodkowski and Jaynes (1990), children who have an interest in drugs, are fascinated by violence, and intrigued by gambling. These are negative influences and may cause a distorted self-concept.

In addition, to family, school, and society, peers also contribute to the building or destruction of a child's self-concept. A change in a child's self-esteem can be directly influenced by a friend, a parent, a teacher, or another caring person (Richardson and Rayder, 1992,). Hocko (1992), states that we base our own self-concept on feedback from others. Individuals place more importance on feedback from some significant others.

Individuals receiving feedback from significant others use it to modify their self-perceptions. Sometimes teachers forget the impact peers have on one another.

The causes for low self-esteem and low reading achievement are many. Site-based investigation and the research literature both indicate that the probable causes lie primarily in the areas of family, school, self, society, and peers. Low self-esteem may result from changes in family life, repeated failure in school, feeling different, and lack of social skills. This may be especially destructive to children because they need stability, and positive experiences in school and with peers.

CHAPTER THREE

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

A review of the literature on self-esteem and self-esteem as related to reading achievement revealed various solutions to the problems of low self-esteem and poor reading success. The researchers believe implementing a self-esteem curriculum, while children are receiving a standard instruction in the reading curriculum, will help children become more secure and proud of themselves, their families, their peers, and their accomplishments. In addition, the reading attitude should improve in all students, as a result of self-esteem lessons. Reading achievement will increase as a result of improved reading attitude. Interventions in the family, school, society and with peers should foster improved self-esteem, and therefore, improve reading scores.

Researchers have found correlations between reading achievement and self-esteem. Walz (1992) states that changing a student's feelings about how well he/she can learn will have a direct effect on how well he/she does learn. Friedmann and Brooks (1990) found a high correlation between academic performance and self-esteem:

> As you know success and failure in school is directly tied to self-esteem. The intelligent child with low self-esteem will do poorly in school...the average child with high self-esteem will generally be successful. It's also true that low self-esteem gets in the way of good performance and that bad

performance reinforces low self-esteem.

"The ability to function successfully in the classroom is critical to a young person's self-esteem, and there is a reciprocal relationship between self-esteem and academic competence- each supports and enhances the other" (Canfield, 1994, p.91). Canfield (1994) states that children with low (poor) self-concepts did not learn to read or did not read as well as children with high (good) concepts. "Low self-esteem has been cited over and over again as a key factor in behavior problems as well as poor academic performance" (Borba, 1989, p.5).

On the other hand, some researchers disagree with the findings of positive correlations between academic performance and self-esteem. William J. Holly (1992) states although self-esteem does not cause academic success, there is ample reason to believe that it can contribute to it. For example, students that feel worthless, also experience depression, which can inhibit academic success. Also, fear of failure can hold students back, and constant failure and feelings of incompetence discourage students' risk taking. A disadvantage of self-esteem is that "feel good notions are harmful rather than helpful" (Branden, 1994, p.203).

When attempting to create a higher self-esteem in children, several steps should be taken. First, the family structure must be nurtured in a positive, caring manner in order to promote high self-esteem. "The goal of building self-esteem is to create a positive, nurturing environment in which children can explore the boundless possibilities of their future" (Murphy, 1996, p.34). Coopersmith (1967) had a research goal to try and ascertain what family conditions helped to promote high self-esteem. Three critical elements common to the homes of those individuals with

high self-esteem included:

1. The individuals came from backgrounds where they experienced the kind of love that expresses respect, concern, and acceptance. Children were accepted for their strengths and capacities as well as for their limitations and weaknesses.
2. Within the household there were clearly defined limits, standards and expectations, and as a result, the child felt secure.
3. Children were encouraged to present their own ideas and opinions for discussion.

Wonderley (1997), agrees with Coopersmith's statements when he states that parenting is the art of bringing up children without putting them down. To grow up healthy and happy and to be good students, children need parental time and attention.

Parents must provide a stimulating, warm home environment in order to raise the intellectual level of their children. Children may be born with a poor, average, or superior intelligence, but an enriched home environment will raise a child's level of intelligence, regardless of the genes the child has inherited. If, for example, a child is born with average intelligence at birth, chances are great that a warm, loving, mentally-stimulating environment from the day the child is born will help him develop into a bright or even a gifted youngster (Wonderley, 1997).

Some ways parents may play a role in developing their child's self-esteem is through positive discipline practices. Much research has proven the need to establish set consequences for actions. A child's self-esteem will also be affected by how much she simply feels liked by her parents.

Parents who can establish discipline routines that are friendly but firm, consistent and supportive will have a better chance of fostering the performance they want from their children, while at the same time continuing to like them (Phelan, 1996, p.98).

Phelan's study (1996), relates how parents must have self-control just as their children must have. Parents must have the self-control to be able to manage their own feelings, especially anger and anxiety. As difficult as parents find the early childhood phase, it's important to recognize that a toddler's obstinacy, her little acts of independence, serve an important function in developing self-esteem. Toddlers will fluctuate between wanting help and wanting to do the job themselves (Murphy, 1996).

Research notes that listening to children increases their self-concept. Active listening is good for children's self-esteem for several reasons. Active listening can communicate confidence in the child and her ability to handle her feelings and problems. There is a kind of closeness involved for both people in the experience of listening and being listened to, which can be especially important to children during times of stress, such as entry into first grade and entry into junior high. Active listening starts with an attitude. The attitude is to understand what someone else is thinking and feeling without judging it (Phelan, 1996). Murphy (1996), states to listen to your children, applaud their effort and help them solve problems, and impose firm, calm, and consistent discipline when appropriate. As parents, it is essential to be good role models. Research by Wonderley (1997), found how important it is to give a child undivided attention, daily, through listening with the same

respect one is expected to give another adult. By doing this, children will not be tempted to rush through thoughts and this will also increase a child's self-confidence. Parents stimulate the child's interest in reading and writing by answering their questions and giving appropriate praise for the efforts in reading and writing.

Being able to share experiences with children in an enjoyable way will promote a positive self-concept.

> Anything that improves parental relationships with children will help their self-esteem. Having fun with children also sends an important message that parents like them. Parents want their children to be able to enjoy these aspects of their lives as well. They want them to appreciate some of the amazing and intriguing things the world has to offer, as well as its beautiful and peaceful features. If children are going to have these experiences, children need to both have fun with parents and have fun without them. Showing children that parents enjoy them, but also that parents have their own times for recreation, relaxation, and renewal is one of the healthiest forms of modeling for both. No child's self-esteem is going to be helped by having a parent who is a martyr. Shared fun is important to children's self-esteem and how they'll live their lives in the future (Phelan, 1996, pp. 138-140).

In order to promote self-confidence in children, character enhancement must be held in high regard. "Parents need to help promote social skills, competence, physical development, and character in their children and they must help the kids judge themselves fairly and accurately" (Phelan, 1996, p.95).

A parent's task, is to help children discover that they have the power to learn, to interact with others, to set goals, and attain goals (Apter, 1997).

Parents have a strong influence on determining their children's academic performance. Parental involvement is the number one factor in determining the success of a child's education. Early stimulation will increase the chances of a child's success in academic and life skills (Wonderley, 1997). Parents must display an enthusiastic attitude towards reading. Wonderley (1997), noted what parents do about reading speaks louder than what parents say!! Whether a child blossoms into an enthusiastic, skilled reader has much to do with the reading climate in the home. Parents have a powerful influence on the reading interest, skills, and more importantly, the love of reading developed by their children. Good parents need to limit television viewing. Wonderley (1997), found that viewing TV is a passive experience, and learning to read requires that the child be aggressive enough to make the effort it takes to learn to read. Learning to read can be very difficult if a child lacks the basic learning skills needed for later reading success.

It has been estimated that the typical middle-income child has already spent nearly 2,000 hours of one-to-one reading, cuddled up with Dad or Mom, having fun talking and reading, which develops a very positive attitude toward reading and books by the time they start first grade (Wonderley, 1997, p.75). A poem taken from "The Reading Mother," by Strickland Gillian from Best Loved Poems of the American People (as cited in Wonderley, 1997, p. 65,) exemplifies the need for parental involvement and support in the promotion of academic success:

You may have tangible wealth untold;
Caskets of jewels and coffers of gold.
Richer than I you can never be,
I had a mother who read to me.

Researchers estimate that only 10 percent of all families give their children optimum opportunities for developing their intellect. Very likely, these are the same 10% of kids who are named to future honor rolls. Raising bright children takes time, energy, and dedication. Researchers believe that if raising an intelligent child is a goal, one must remember a person's approach to life is determined by his parents' actions during early years of development. Role models need to remember this when providing direct and indirect modeling (Wonderley, 1997).

Families are not the only important contributors to the embellishment of student's self-esteem. The classroom environment, the teacher, the student, and the curriculum in schools all play an essential part in the development of student's self-esteem. By creating environments that engender security and develop strength, educators can help students acquire the feelings needed to build self-esteem. Coopersmith (1967), found that classrooms effective in having self-esteem are those in which students perceive a sense of warmth and love, are offered a degree of security that allows them to grow and to try new things without an overriding concern about failure, are respected as individuals, are encouraged to have ideas and opinions, recognize that there are clear and definite limits within the environment, are given rules and standards that are reasonably and consistently enforced, have a chance to succeed at their own level, and are accepted with "no strings attached."

More people than just the teacher help create a warm classroom environment where positive self-concepts are fostered. Good results in esteem building have generally come from a group setting. Examples of the group setting may include parent aides, cross age tutors, foster grandparents, and a staff adopt-a-student program. Parent aides can give the teacher extra time to give personal support to children who need their full attention. Teachers can contribute an ongoing list of builder-upper statements for parent aides to use. Cross age tutors help build self-esteem of the students with whom they work. Foster grandparents are patient and loving and often develop a close bond with a student and become an important esteem builder. Lastly, a staff adopt-a-student program in which each staff member is assigned one "high-risk" student with low self-esteem who needs esteem building. The staff member supports the student in any way possible (Borba, 1989, p.17).

"Teachers must provide a learner friendly environment to capture the interest of their students. Boredom depresses esteem; interest and excitement increase the sense of self; an active involvement in life nourishes self-esteem" (Berne & Savary, 1981, p.76).

Another necessary ingredient in the making of a confident child and an academic achiever is a nurturing teacher. According to Borba (1989), to enable children to achieve their potential every teacher needs to address the issue of self-esteem and strive to establish the conditions that enhance those attitudes conducive to learning. These conditions include providing a secure environment, a sense of warmth and love, an interesting classroom, and a treatment of children as individuals.

By creating climates in our schools and classrooms that foster self-esteem, teachers can significantly improve the level of functioning in students.

Borba (1989), has listed certain qualities of a teacher who best promotes student's self-esteem. Borba wishes for the teacher to become a "significant other". Whether or not another individual can change a student's current self-esteem depends on how significant the individual is to the student. By becoming a "significant other," or esteem builder, an educator plays a critical role in self-esteem enhancement. It is important to win a student's trust and respect. Teachers should possess the following qualities (Borba, 1989, p.5):

a. Sincere interest and concern for the student.
b. Personal rapport such that the student feels significant to the esteem builder.
c. Belief that a student's self-image can be positive.
d. Willingness to "open up" to students and share genuine personal qualities/experiences with them.
e. Desire to build a trusting relationship and be someone who is both reliable and trustworthy.
f. Willingness to review one's own self-picture periodically.

Feldman, on the other hand, has suggested various strategies to enrich self-esteem in the student. As educators committed to the whole child, it is critical to do as much as possible to enhance each child's self-esteem. Rather than a single teaching style, there are many strategies you can utilize to help

accomplish this goal (Feldman, 1997, p.ix-x):

a. Accept children for who they are and what they are. Acceptance will lead to feelings of self-acceptance in the child.

b. Treat children as individuals.

c. Use children's names frequently. Become familiar with their life outside of school.

d. Respect children, their families, and their culture.

e. Recognize that there are many ways for children to be talented other than an IQ score.

f. Help children see that they are multi-dimensional "I'm good at ____, but I need to work on ____."

g. Become a "child observer." Be sensitive to their reactions and comments during the school day.

h. Know what your students are developmentally capable of.

i. Empower children by giving them choices.

j. Encourage children to be independent, accept responsibilities, and follow through on tasks.

k. Set clear rules and expectations for behavior.

l. Be fair and consistent.

m. Follow a schedule and routine so children know what to expect.

n. Provide children with opportunities to vent their energy and emotions with exercise breaks and outdoor play.

o. Avoid overreacting when children make mistakes.

p. Do not use labels or name calling.

q. Value creativity and originality.

r. Ask open-ended questions and accept divergent answers.

s. Encourage children to be problem-solvers.

t. Be available to children.

u. Take advantage of plenty of nonverbal messages with plenty of smiles and pats on the back.

v. Celebrate children's accomplishments.

w. Help children set goals and experience delayed gratification.

x. Use encouragement with children, rather than rewards.

y. Let children overhear you making positive comments about them.

The job of the teacher is quite challenging in promoting student self-concept and academic success. Teachers need to enhance the whole child emotionally as well as intellectually, physically, and socially to achieve his or her full potential. "Although many teachers support this principle,there is very little practical material available to help them nurture emotional development in the classroom" (Feldman, 1997, p. v). Teachers need to keep a child's attention focused on the tasks at hand, and away from the concern about assessing her ability, or about disappointing others. They also must give the message that an activity, not an innate ability, is being tried out (Apter, 1997).

Researchers indicate several strategies that teachers can use to enhance their students' self-esteem. Booream (1978) states that children who participate in self-esteem building projects showed

dramatic improvement, in both social skills, grades, and in measures of self-esteem. Also, " self-esteem exercises help build a self-enhancing climate. They help students become aware of themselves in different dimensions. Students begin to see themselves as distinct and unique individuals " (Canfield, 1994, p. 17). Projects may consist of affirmations, journaling about what makes each student special, producing self-portraits, working with others, recognizing each family, and focusing on personal uniqueness.

Loomans (1994) states that affirmations are a very basic tool of self-management, through the choice of thoughts and words. "Learning to use affirmations is a vital tool that will build self-esteem and encourage children to be self-accepting. Students should practice affirmations each day and watch their self-esteem grow" (Loomans, 1994, p.73). Friedmann and Brooks (1990) state that children should tell each other one thing they like about themselves each day.

Keeping a journal provides a great adventure in self-discovery. Canfield (1994) states that journals allow students to keep an ongoing account of how they are growing, of what is happening to them, of how they uniquely respond to a given situation. It is the cumulative effect over a long period of time that makes journals effective. Journals evolve into a very complete book about themselves. Friedmann and Brooks (1990) feel that writing about what children like to do, their friends, and their families help children discover their uniqueness and builds their self-esteem.

Canfield and Borba both suggest that self-portraits are a beneficial way for students to express and visualize their

uniqueness. This tends to build identity. Friedmann and Brooks (1990) suggest in their self-esteem program, that children should have opportunities to draw about their lives.

Weinstein and Fantini as stated in Canfield (1994), suggest that there are three areas of concern that people seem to spend most of their time thinking about: identity, connectedness, and power. Identity can be expressed through self-reflection, working with others creates connectedness, and gaining control over one's life by feeling confident creates power. Working together is an essential part of a self-esteem program. For example, using a name recognition activity, as suggested by Canfield (1994), helps students learn names and establish positive feelings towards themselves, and towards their classmates. Another example is for each student to decorate a piece of a classroom puzzle. Each piece represents the individual child, while, at the same time, connecting classmates together in the final product.

According to Canfield (1994), pride is related to self-concept. In the school setting students can participate in activities that draw on family traditions. Recognizing each family through activities such as creating a family poster, reading with a family member, and sharing family traditions with classmates enhances this pride.

The student himself must take responsibility in becoming successful in both self-concept and academics.The student's willingness to learn, behavior, and self-concept are integral components of success.

Some children are anxious because they set very high standards for themselves. "They feel they 'fail' when they cannot meet their unrealistic expectations. Their intelligence is equal

to those more relaxed who assess themselves highly, but they may seem less bright because their anxiety creates a mental muddle" (Apter, 1997, p. 49). Teachers can help these students by teaching them to focus on one goal at a time to reduce anxiety. Apter (1997), says students need to replace anxiety with a sense of control and confidence. Sometimes lack of a specific skill arouses anxiety in children. Whenever a child is frozen by such a limitation, teachers should work with the student to identify the missing skill. With this approach students feel that they can learn something to remove the panic they feel. If students freeze at "big words," encourage them to ask questions (Apter, 1997).

Students need to learn to believe in themselves in order to be successful learners and improve their self-concept; therefore, teachers must promote risk-taking in the classroom. Often times students are not aware of what they are capable of accomplishing. A child with low self-esteem believes that she will not be able to perform adequately. "This background noise of doubt gives rise to an inability to tolerate ambiguity or imprecision. Children need help exercising their judgment, making decisions and accepting both the negative and positive consequences" (Apter, 1997, p.50). As Apter says (1997), when children view intelligence as a moldable quality, their learning goals progress. Such children believe that when they try, they will be able to do what they could not do before. A child who is lagging behind her peers will need your support if she is to continue to believe that she has a range of abilities.

Children may not let their inappropriate behavior interfere with their ability to learn and feel confident. When children exhibit positive behaviors, they are given the opportunity for

more freedom throughout the classroom to explore their capabilities. According to Berne & Savary (1996), children's self-esteem grows when they feel they can move freely at their own pace.

A student's personal feelings of self contributes greatly to success in the classroom. Borba (1989) states that teachers need to help students form accurate inner-pictures of the self, because an individual with low self-esteem generally carries an inaccurate inner picture. Teachers need to provide positive, successful, achievable experiences within areas of self-esteem where students struggle.

The starting block toward a more positive feeling of self is to help students develop an accurate self-description. Any activity that helps students to clarify, sharpen, or think more in depth about themselves will enhance self-concept. "Children need to become appreciative of personal physical characteristics and traits, recognize their strengths and shortcomings, and from this build a more accurate self-picture with which they can feel comfortable-even proud" (Borba, 1989, p. 99). Bean and Putnam (1977), found that high self-esteem occurs when children experience the positive feelings of satisfaction that result from having a sense of uniqueness. That is, a child acknowledges and respects the personal characteristics that make him special and different, and receives approval and respect from others.

According to Patterson (1973), the concepts which the teacher has of the children become the concepts which the children come to have of themselves. Teachers need to relay to students that making mistakes is part of learning. An accepting environment will allow this to evolve.

"Learning how to solve problems is essential to the recovery of self-esteem and making mistakes is an important part of learning how to solve problems" (Apter, 1997, p.45).

The curriculum in schools also influences students' ability to achieve increased academic success and confidence. "Activities that provide opportunities for students to reflect upon significant experiences, and in the process help shift the existing self-image, are particularly beneficial for the low self-esteem student"(Borba, 1989, p.105). Using age-appropriate literature also promotes the reading performance and self-concepts of students. According to Cunningham and Allington (1999), once you have a reading program set up in your classroom, you have transformed the reading and rereading of simple books into a purposeful, self-esteem building activity. Once children can read a piece, many teachers duplicate it and send it home for the children to read to parents and to other family members. "Parents of struggling readers are especially pleased when they see their children succeeding in school" (Cunningham and Allington, 1999, p.52).

We as a society must instill positive self-esteem in all children. Borba (1989), suggests that school districts should periodically hire a blimp to fly low over playgrounds so that every student can read the banner that say, "You are special.....be proud of it!" All students need the opportunity to feel unique and to know their special qualities are appreciated and respected by others. This is how self-worth develops; such a feeling is not inherited, it is learned. "Children's self-esteem grows when they know they are having a positive effect on the larger world" (Berne & Savary, 1996, p.81).

According to Revell (1974), self-esteem is related to the recognition we achieve from other people. Peers have direct influence on one another's confidence level. "In a struggle for social recognition, peers can provide important avenues for a student's social skill development and sense of affiliation that adults and family experiences alone cannot fulfill" (Borba, 1989, p.163). Smith (1982), found that children's feelings about themselves have important effects on how successfully they deal with friendships. A feeling of personal significance is necessary for children to reach out to others with confidence: believing in their own competence enables them to resolve social problems; and feeling lovable makes affectionate ties more likely.

Educators must teach children social skills in complimenting one another. Borba (1989), states that classroom investigations show that one of the most successful components for enhancing self-concept is teaching students to praise others. Praising others is not only helpful in gaining social acceptance, but can also be beneficial to building the sender's esteem.

In summary, the researchers concluded from the literature that there are several main interventions to increase self-esteem. Self-esteem is dependent upon treating the child as an individual, providing a secure environment, celebrating the child's accomplishments, and working successfully with others. All of these interventions can be reinforced in the home, at school, in society at large, and within the child himself.

Developing a warm personal relationship with children is important in building their self-esteem. Giving praise, one-on-one attention, focusing on their strengths and uniqueness, and

encouraging their ideas are all helpful in increasing their self-esteem.

In addition, providing a safe and nurturing environment contributes to increased self-esteem. Having fair and consistent guidelines, a learner friendly atmosphere, and encouraging choices promotes risk taking in children. These stimulating situations raise the intellect and self-esteem in children.

The literature also recommended celebrating individual accomplishments in order to increase self-esteem.Praise, reflective journaling, daily affirmations, and accepting divergent answers all contributes to self-esteem building.

Society demands successful interactions with others. Learning to deal positively with friendships and peers and using team building skills all encourage children to work together in a successful manner. Children need to know that they have an effect on the larger world.

Project Objectives and Processes

As a result of self-esteem lessons, during the period of September 1998 to January 1999, the first, second and third grade students will increase their self-esteem and reading achievement, as measured through questionnaires to parents, and diagnostic measurements and selected classroom assessments of reading skills and self-esteem.

The targeted goals of the researchers were for children in the studied groups of first, second, and third graders to become more secure and proud of themselves, their families, their peers, and their accomplishments. In addition, the reading attitude should improve in all students as a result of the implemented

self-esteem program. As a result of these implementations the reading achievement of these students will improve. Strategies that will be used in this action research project are daily self-esteem journal writing, daily oral affirmations, and weekly self-esteem lessons based upon research.

The researchers chose the following strategies to be included in their action plan based upon what was found in literature and studies regarding self-esteem. Interventions were chosen that were consistent with the categories found to play an important role in building student self-esteem. These categories consist of treating children as individuals, providing a secure environment, celebrating accomplishments, and working together with others. Much of the research stated that the family was very important in increasing self-esteem, however; the action research plan could not effect family life as part of the intervention.

In order to treat children as unique individuals and celebrate their accomplishments, the researchers chose to focus on student individuality for a majority of the action plan. Activities included creating self-portraits, discussing what is amazing about themselves, having an I Can Do Something Special Day, creating a V.I.P. Family book, reading at home with their families, reading self-esteem poems, playing the Toss and Tell game, writing daily journal reflections, and discussing daily affirmations.

The researchers consistently recognized the students' accomplishments, and provided a learner friendly environment. By setting clear expectations and guidelines, and by accepting students for who they are, the researchers encouraged their students to feel secure and enriched. This type of atmosphere

contributed to enhancing the whole child emotionally, and allowed the students to explore and accept their uniqueness.

Finally, the researchers chose to incorporate team building activities to demonstrate to children that they can contribute to others in a positive way. The following strategies helped students learn that they can make a difference. These include reading with buddies, Boo Buddies, Somebody Loves You Mr. Hatch activity, the Name Game, making a team sign/motto, and a working together puzzle.

Project Action Plan

In order to accomplish the project objective the following processes are necessary:

1. Materials that foster self-esteem will be developed.
2. A series of self-esteem lessons that address family, school, society and peers will be developed.
3. Daily affirmations reflecting these lessons will be constructed.
4. Self-esteem journals that foster high self-esteem will be developed.

Project Action Plan:

The action plan is presented in outline form by five day weeks rather than specific dates. The schedule covers the time frame that begins with September 7 as week one and ends on December 18 with week 15. The action plan follows:

Week 1-Administer pretests

I. Topic: Celebrating Self-Focus or individuality
   A. Look at all the happy, smiling faces in our room
      1. Students will illustrate and write about what makes them special on a T-shirt patterned paper.
      2. Students will create their faces out of construction paper and yarn to add to their t-shirts.

3. Students will share their final products with classmates.
4. Final products will be displayed in the hallway for others to see

B. Weekly journal starters
1. Tell me something you are looking forward to in school this year.
2. My favorite part of summer was...
3. My favorite part of the school day is...
4. The best part of the school week was...

C. Daily oral affirmation: I am special because...

Week 2

II. Topic: Celebrating Self

A. Amazing Me (Feldman, p.36)
1. Read Amazing Grace by Mary Hoffman and Caroline Binch
2. Students discuss what is amazing about themselves.
3. Children will write or draw about themselves in a body shape book.
4. Students will share with classmates and display on bulletin board.

B. Weekly journal starters
1. I am best at..
2. When I grow up I want to be...
3. After school I...
4. I am sure glad I ...
5. I like me because...

C. Daily affirmation: Today I learned...

Week 3

III. Topic: Celebrating self

A. I Can Do Something Special Day
1. Discuss how we all have special talents.
2. Encourage children to tell the different things they can do well.
3. Ask them if they would like to have an I Can Do Something Special Day at the end of the week where everyone who wants to may sing a song, tell a joke, share their art work, tell a story, or do a trick.
4. Remind the children daily about the day.
5. Let the children share their special talent.

B. Weekly journal starters
1. People like to watch me...
2. Another thing that I am good at...
3. Something I can do all by myself...
4. I am glad I learned to...
5. I liked showing my talent because.

c. Daily affirmation: I like me because...

Week 4
IV. Topic: Family
A. VIP Family Book (Feldman, p. 26-27): Children will realize what a very important person they are as they recognize family members who love them.
1. Class will discuss what a VIP is and how their family makes them feel like a VIP.
2. Brainstorm ideas how their family makes them feel.
3. Children will fill in statements and illustrate the pages in the book (1).
4. Children will create their own statements about their families (2-3).
5. Students will share their books with classmates.
B. Weekly journal starters
1. My family loves me because...
2. I like to go _____ with my family...
3. In my house I help to ...
4. My favorite room in the house is...
5. My family is special because...
C. Daily affirmation: I love my family because...

Week 5
V. Topic: Family
A. We are Family Poster: Children will develop language skills and family pride as they tell others about their family.
1. Teacher writes note home to parents to explain this home activity.
2. Families will create a poster collage of what their family likes to do together.
3. Children will bring posters to school to share with peers.
B. Weekly journal starters
1. My family likes to....
2. Families are the same because...
3. Families are different because...
4. My family makes me feel...
5. My favorite family memory was...
C. Daily affirmation: My family loves me because...

Week 6
VI. Topic: Family
A.Home reading activity
1. Parents help children review a class book at home using various suggested strategies and write comments back to the teacher.
2. Students read and review strategies they used.
B. Weekly journal entries
1. I like to read to someone in my family because...
2. I thought the book I read was...
3. I like reading books to _____ because ....
4. I like to read books that are ...
5. I am a good reader because...

D. Daily affirmation: Reading is...

Week 7
VII. Topic: Friends
A. Reading with buddies
1. Children read with a buddy and share their favorite part of the story.
2. Each child will share what their buddies' favorite part of the story is with the rest of the class.
B. Weekly journal entries
1. I choose my friends because...
2. Friends like to...
3. I was a friend to someone when...
4. Someone who makes me feel happy is...
5. Once someone helped me by...
C. Daily affirmation: I am a good friend because...

Week 8
VIII. Topic: Friends
A. Boo Buddies: Spark friendships and foster kind deeds
1. Give each child a piece of paper and ask them to write their names.
2. Collect names in a box.
3. Tell the children that they will each get to draw the name of a classmate to be their boo buddy.
4. Explain how boo buddies do nice deeds for each other, such as drawing them pictures, writing notes, or making them things.
5. Let the children suggest other nice things they could do for their secret boo buddy.
6. Remind them that they must be very secretive so their secret friend won't figure out who they are.
7. Pass the box and let each child draw a name.
8. Children will then make a special something for their boo buddy.
B. Weekly journal entries
1. Friends are...
2. I am a good friend because...
3. I can tell someone likes me when...
4. I make new friends by...
5. Some of my friends' names are...
C. Daily affirmation: My favorite thing to do with a friend is...

Week 9
IX. Topic: Friends
A. Somebody Loves You Mr. Hatch activity
1. Read Somebody Loves You Mr. Hatch by Eileen Spinelli
2. Discuss what happened in the story and why Mr. Hatch changed.
3. What could classmates do to make somebody feel

special?

B. Weekly journal entries
   1. Someone I would like to be friends with is ...
   2. My friends think I am good at...
   3. I am a good friend when...
   4. I like having friends because...
   5. What have you done to make someone feel better?

C. Daily affirmation: Friends are important because...

Week 10

X. Topic: Team Building

A. Name game: A fun way to learn children's name and recognize their uniqueness as well as developing their memory and letter-sound relationships.
   1. Children sit in a circle and take turns going around stating their name and what they like to do using the same initial letter in their name.
   2. Students repeat their peers' statements until everyone in the circle is represented.
   3. Students may help others remember each child's statement.

B. Weekly journal starters
   1. A team is...
   2. Teams are important because...
   3. How are you a team player?
   4. I like being on a team because...
   5. Teams are fun because...

C. Daily affirmation: Say something nice to someone in your group.

Week 11

XI. Topic: Team Building

A. Team Sign
   1. Teacher will be a cooperative learning experience.
   2. Group members will create a sign/motto to represent their group.
   3. Groups will share their signs with classmates.

B. Weekly journal starters
   1. My teacher helps me...
   2. I help others....
   3. I can do _____ alone, but I need others to ...
   4. I like people who....
   5. My group is great because...

C. Daily affirmation: I contribute to my group by...

Week 12

XII. Topic: Team Building

A. Working Together Puzzle
   1. Teacher creates the number of the grade out of poster board.
   2. Teacher cuts up the number into pieces, allowing each child a piece.
   3. Teacher writes a number on the back of each piece.

4. Children pick a puzzle piece out of the bag and decorate one side of the piece to tell something about them.
5. Each child explains the picture on their puzzle piece.
6. Teacher calls out one number at a time and the class puts the mystery puzzle back together.
7. Number is displayed in the classroom for others to enjoy.

B. Weekly journal starters
1. I put _____ on my puzzle piece because...
2. I like working with a buddy because...
3. My class helps me...
4. I like reading with...
5. My favorite thing to do with my classmates is...

C. Daily affirmation: We are good at...

Week 13
XIII. Topic: Personal Accomplishments
A. Toss and Tell (Feldman, p. 40).
1. Have the children sit in a circle.
2. Explain that whomever is holding the bean bag should say his/her name and something he/she can do well.
3. This person then tosses the bean bag to another students who will then tell something he/she does well.
4. The game continues until each child has the opportunity to tell something he/she does well.

B. Weekly journal starters
1. This year I have learned...
2. I am a better reader because...
3. I am better at _____ because....
4. Today I am going to try...
5. I like learning about...

C. Daily affirmation: Name rap (Feldman, p.41)

Week 14
XIV. Topic: Personal Accomplishments
A. I am One of a Kind poem (Lipson p. 23)
1. Students will choral read the poem and discuss.
2. Children will create a self-portrait to display next to a copy of the poem on colored construction paper.
3. Children will take these home to be given to parents for a holiday gift.

B. Weekly journal starters:
1. I feel happy when...
2. I am proud of myself because...
3. Every day I look forward to...
4. I am a good reader because...

5. My classmates like me because...
C. Daily affirmation: I feel good when...

Methods of Assessment

In order to assess the effects of the intervention reading tests and a self-esteem test will be developed. The Elementary Attitude Survey created by Michael C. McKenna and Dennis J. Kear, (Appendix A), a teacher-made first grade reading assessment, (Appendix B), The Brigance Basic Skills Reading Comprehension Test, (Appendix C), a teacher created self-concept scale, (Appendix D), and an observation guide for parents created by R. Anthony, T. Johnson, N. Mickelson, and A.Preece, (Appendix E). In addition, journals of student work in self-esteem areas will be kept throughout the intervention period on a daily basis for a fifteen minute duration. These entries answer the statement of the day and are between one and five sentences long in length. The journal entries will be used for self-reflection purposes. Also, oral daily affirmations were discussed daily and shared with classmates the last ten minutes of the school day.

CHAPTER FOUR

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this project was to investigate the correlation between student self-esteem and reading achievement. The targeted classrooms were comprised of one first-grade class, one second-grade class, and one-third grade class.

The implementation of self-esteem lessons that addressed family, school, society and peers, were selected to improve students' knowledge of and attitudes towards themselves. Many activities were utilized to promote self-esteem. Daily self-esteem journal writing, daily oral affirmations, and weekly self-esteem lessons were implemented based upon research.

The interventions were broken into categories based on the topics of self, family, peers, and society. The teaching of self and individuality occurred at the beginning of our intervention. Children were encouraged to celebrate their accomplishments. Activities focused on creating projects that centered around their lives. The remainder of the intervention concentrated on the people involved in the children's lives, family, and peers. Lessons involved recognizing the student's place in his or her family, reading at home, working with a team, and being a friend. Children were made aware of how they effect others' lives.

These themes all included daily journal writing for fifteen minutes. The daily journal writing was designed to ignite student thinking and reflection, and was continued throughout the

intervention. Each student kept a self-esteem journal (Appendix F). The journal entries were in response to the statement of the day which were related to the weekly self-esteem themes. A sample starter sentence was "I am best at..." Another example was "I like to read to someone in my family because..."

The daily oral affirmations (Appendix G), discussed at the end of the day for approximately ten minutes, allowed the students to reflect on and share their feelings aloud to fellow classmates. Examples of daily oral affirmations were "I am special because..." and "I like me because..." Topics of discussion were chosen to correlate with the weekly self-esteem lessons.

Weekly self-esteem lessons were the core of the intervention. Hands-on activities were selected based on research recommendations. These were introduced in a variety of ways; including literature, art projects, writing activities and discussions. Students performed the activities in cooperative learning groups and independently. For example, researchers read the book Amazing Grace by Mary Hoffman and Caroline Binch to incorporate literature into the celebrating self theme. The students then wrote about what made them amazing. The Working Together Puzzle was an art project that demonstrated how individuals are unique, but work together to accomplish a goal. Prior to the lesson, the researchers prepared a puzzle in the shape of the grade level taught. Each child received a piece of the puzzle to decorate showing their interests and qualities. The puzzle was then put together and displayed in the classroom for others to enjoy.

Researchers assessed their intervention using the following instruments: The Elementary Attitude Survey (Appendix A), a First Grade Reading Assessment (Appendix B), The Brigance Basic Skills Reading Comprehension Test (Appendix C), a self-concept scale (Appendix D), and a parent observation guide (Appendix E).

All three sites followed the same guidelines. All selected assessments were given as pretests prior to the intervention. These tests were administered to establish a baseline knowledge of self-esteem and reading achievement. Following the intervention, the same tools were given as post tests (Appendices A, B, C, D, E). A discussion of the test results is below.

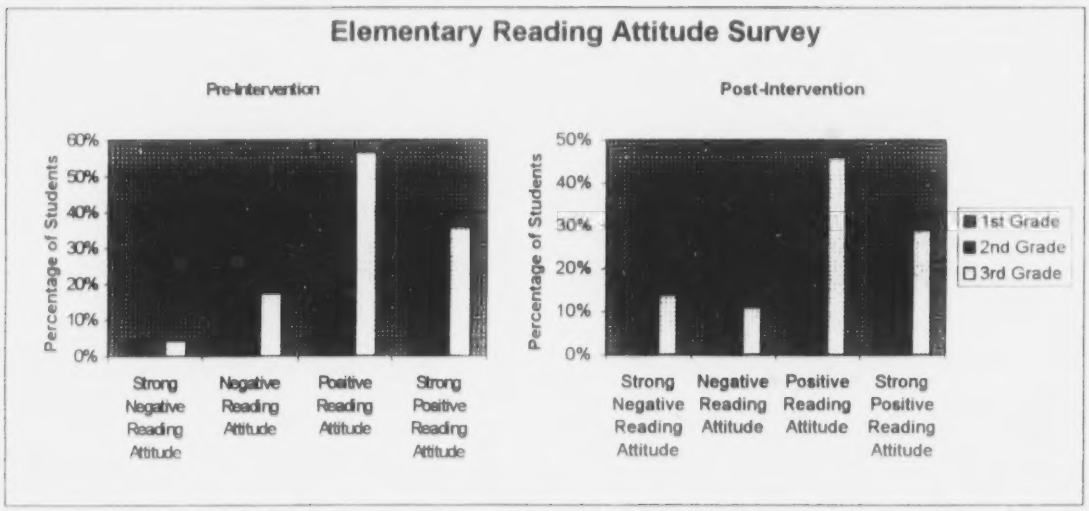
Presentation and Analysis of Results

The intervention seemed to have positive aspects, but the results varied. There were many positive gains in students' reading achievement and self-esteem feelings; however, the researchers were unable to decipher whether the self-esteem intervention was the primary cause for reading growth.

When presented with the pre- and post- intervention, Elementary Reading Attitude Survey, as seen in Figure 9, the researchers noted that the reading attitudes of all targeted students were more distributed. Researchers believe that perhaps the students were more comfortable with their setting and gave more honest answers about their reading attitudes on the post-test in comparison with the pre-test results. The objective of this survey was to reveal students' feelings towards reading, both recreational and the academic aspects of reading. Researchers were surprised to see the increase in the strong negative reading attitude at all grade levels, especially at the second grade

level. In addition, the researchers were pleased to find that there was a representation of strong positive reading attitudes at all grade levels.

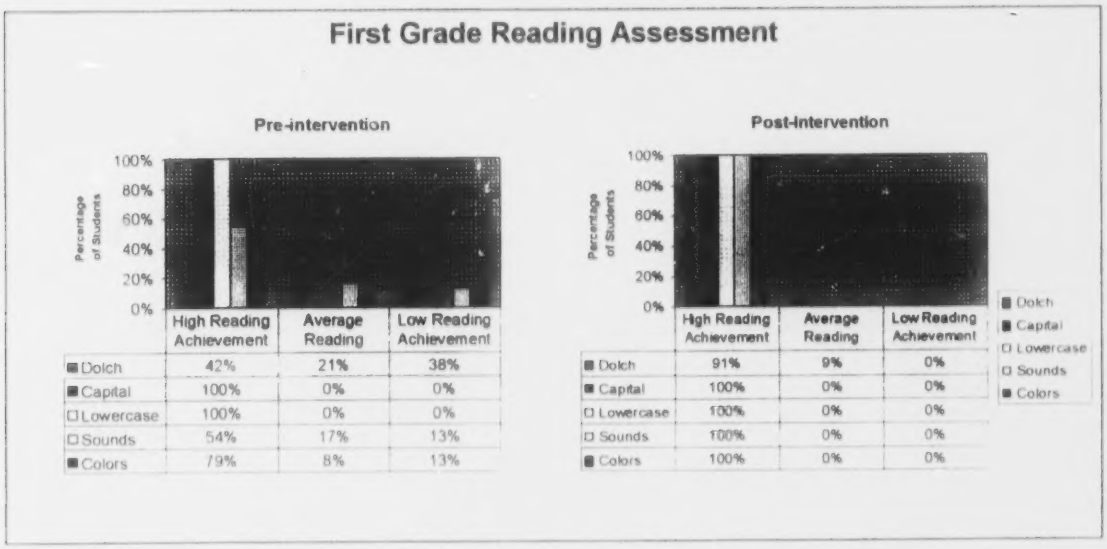
Figure 9



The First Grade Reading Assessment was used to assess first grade knowledge of 41 Dolch words, 26 capital and lower case letters, letter-sound correspondence of initial consonants, and 9 color words. There was a notable increase in student test scores. As Figure 10 displays, there were no students who scored in the low achievement range at the time of the post-test. All improved and now fall in the average or high reading achievement level. Perhaps this improvement indicates students gained from the intervention. However, the increase noted by the test scores is consistent with previous years' test scores where children were taught under a regular reading program with no set self-esteem curriculum. Perhaps these test scores indicate the natural developmental reading process. Dolch words, lower case and capital

letter recognition, letter-sound correspondence, and color words are concepts expected to be learned in the first grade curriculum regardless of any additional enrichment or the reading program. See Figure 10 for details.

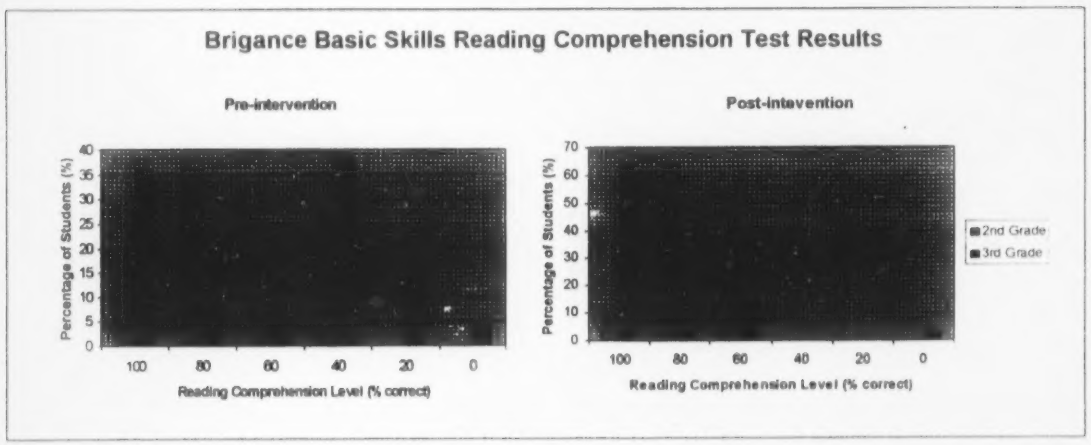
Figure 10



The second and third graders were given a section of the Brigance Basic Skills Reading Comprehension Test. The objective was to assess their reading comprehension level. Students read a passage and answered five corresponding comprehension questions. The pre-test was given with the lower grade level versions of this test. The post-test was given with the upper grade level versions of this test. The pre-test scores for second graders ranged from 40% to 100% comprehension levels, whereas the post-test range was from 60% to 100% comprehension levels. The pre-test scores for third graders ranged from 0% to 100%, with 38% of the students reading at grade level. After taking the post-test, the range continued to be from 0% to 100%; however, 95% of the third graders achieved in the 60% to 100% comprehension level.

These results show improvement in reading achievement. Possibly, the gains noted were enhanced because of the intervention in self-esteem. See Figure 11.

Figure 11



The teacher-created Self-Concept Scale consisted of 18 questions that asked students how they felt about family, peers, academics, and self. Students answered the questions with either a yes or no response. First graders made small positive gains in the areas of peers, self, and academics. Perhaps this is a direct result of the self-esteem intervention. It was also noted that in the pre-test first graders felt best about their families, whereas in the post-test they felt best about self and academics. It seemed evident that the first graders made a transfer from their home life to school life. First grade was different from the other grade levels due to this transition from being at home to working and understanding their role as a student at school.

Second and third graders made gains in all four areas. Both groups felt best about themselves throughout the intervention

period. In addition, the second grade made a 38% gain and the third grade made a 33% gain in the peer category. The researchers were pleased to see these improvements in the students' self-concept. Possibly this was due to the intervention in self-esteem.

The researchers believed the post-intervention gains can be attributed to a warm, nurturing, and safe environment provided during the intervention. In addition, rereading the journals and providing the students with options for their responses and discussions, promoted risk-taking. The secure environment allowed children to feel comfortable challenging themselves. The children valued their journals and felt good about reflecting on their lives. Also, the themes of self, family, peers, and society in the self-esteem activities allowed children to reflect and transfer self-esteem concepts throughout the day in various situations. See Figure 12 for additional information.

Figure 12: Self - Concept Scale Results

	First Grade		Second Grade		Third Grade	
Category	Pre-intervention	Post-intervention	Pre-intervention	Post-intervention	Pre-intervention	Post-intervention
Peers	82%	83%	54%	93%	44%	77%
Family	94%	92%	88%	97%	85%	93%
Self	92%	95%	93%	100%	87%	94%
Academic	91%	95%	85%	96%	85%	88%

Percentage of Positive Self Concept Responses.

Self Esteem Scale	
Low Self Esteem	72 - 79 %
Average Self Esteem	80 - 87 %
High Self Esteem	88 - 95 %

The parent observation tool was distributed to all parents in the targeted classrooms in order to learn parental views regarding their child's learning capabilities as a reader. The percentage of negative responses in the categories of reading motivation and reading strategies decreased at the first and second grade levels. Parents of first and second grade children felt that their children's motivation to write was overshadowed by their willingness and ability to read. The researchers believe that this may be attributed to the intervention of the self-esteem journal. Perhaps these children were unmotivated to write as much at home because of the amount of writing time spent at school. At the third grade level, there was an increase of negative responses in the areas of reading motivation and reading strategies. Perhaps this is due to higher parental expectations of the targeted children. The researchers feel that the parents at all grade levels are more straight forward and honest about their child's viewpoints at this time of year rather than at the beginning of the year. This may be due to the familiarity with the teacher and the intervention program in the classroom. See Figure 13.

Figure 13: Parent Observation Checklist Results

Question Type		First Grade Negative Responses		Second Grade Negative Responses		Third Grade Negative Responses	
		Pre-intervention	Post-intevention	Pre-intervention	Post-intevention	Pre-intervention	Post-intevention
Category	Reading Motivation	23%	11%	6%	0%	12%	19%
	Reading Strategies	57%	16%	11%	5%	20%	24%
	Writing Motivation	30%	34%	28%	38%	38%	35%

Percentage of Parent Responses at Each Grade Level.

In order to see relations between students' self-esteem and reading achievement, a self-esteem and reading achievement score for each child was created by the researchers. These scores were then combined in order to form the table showing correlations. self-esteem score. It was noted that the third graders displayed the lowest self-èsteem and reading achievement correlation in the pre-test, prior to intervention. The researchers hypothesized that as children aged their self-esteem had a greater negative impact on their reading achievement. After the intervention, students were again tested. Post-test results indicated that all targeted students improved in their reading achievement. Surprisingly, only small, if any, gains in students' self-esteem scores were found. First graders' average self-esteem score decreased by 1%. Second graders' average self-esteem score remained the same. Third graders' average self-esteem score only increased by 1%. Researchers found no correlation between the self-esteem and reading achievement score. This was quite disappointing to the researchers after the 16 week intervention lessons. However, researchers feel a 16 week program is not enough to counteract a child's lifetime of self-esteem experiences, both positive and negative. Family life is a huge contributor in creating who a child is and overcoming negative home lives is too difficult for educators to accomplish. In addition, students have varied reading experiences at home. The foundation of reading for some children is only what they receive at school. Some students are getting contradictory reading experiences or not enough support at home. There are multiple factors beyond the control of the school.

Despite the limited gain of only 1% in self-esteem scores, the researchers did observe gains in self-esteem gains in their

classrooms. It was hard to account for gains in self-esteem on paper, and it was difficult to measure self-esteem gains in children without full verbal command. The researchers believe that the self-esteem scores were varied depending upon the type of day the children were having. If a child was reprimanded prior to the assessment, his/her self-esteem score may have been negatively influenced. See Figures 14, 15, & 16.

Figure 14

First Grade Reading Score vs. Positive Self-Esteem Score

Student	Reading Score		Self-Esteem Score	
	Pre-intervention	Post-intervention	Pre-intervention	Post-intervention
1.01	98	100	100	94
1.02	97	99	92	86
1.03	92	99	77	67
1.04	96	98	88	96
1.05	95	99	100	98
1.06	88	93	91	78
1.07	88	97	85	92
1.08	74	93	93	92
1.09	81	92	66	68
1.10	79	87	73	64
1.11	60	89	90	73
1.12	53	100	90	79
1.13	64	93	94	83
1.14	44	89	85	82
1.15	43	93	75	78
1.16	49	85	94	44
1.17	58	89	55	91
1.18	100	98	84	74
1.19	82	94	66	98
1.20	79	96	73	76
1.21	99	100	71	81
1.22	100	100	73	82
Average	**78**	**95**	**83**	**81**

Figure 15

Second Grade Reading Score vs. Positive Self-Esteem Score

Student	Reading Score		Self-Esteem Score	
	Pre-intervention	Post-intervention	Pre-intervention	Post-intervention
2.01	40	60	94	94
2.02	80	80	96	100
2.03	80	100	81	70
2.04	40	80	77	78
2.05	100	80	82	82
2.06	80	80	98	96
2.07	60	80	85	84
2.08	60	60	92	86
2.09	40	80	84	92
2.10	100	80	94	76
2.11	80	60	64	93
Average	69	76	86	86

Figure 16

Third Grade Reading Score vs. Positive Self-Esteem Score

Student	Reading Score		Self-Esteem Score	
	Pre-intervention	Post-intervention	Pre-intervention	Post-intervention
3.01	80	100	100	85
3.02	60	80	100	85
3.03	80	100	97	84
3.04	20	60	97	96
3.05	100	80	95	68
3.06	100	80	94	90
3.07	100	100	94	78
3.08	80	100	94	75
3.09	60	100	94	91
3.10	60	80	94	95
3.11	0	100	93	92
3.12	100	100	90	85
3.13	100	60	89	63
3.14	80	100	89	81
3.15	100	100	84	91
3.16	100	100	83	83
3.17	100	100	82	85
3.18	40	60	82	85
3.19	100	100	80	95
3.20	20	100	80	87
3.21	100	100	78	92
3.22	40	0	73	64
3.23	80	100	70	84
3.24	60	80	66	97
3.25	20	100	64	93
3.26	80	100	63	89
3.27	40	100	51	90
3.28	20	60	43	59
Average	69	87	83	84

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the presentation and analysis of the data on improving students' reading achievement through the use of self-esteem lessons, the students showed little correlation between reading achievement and self-esteem. Post-test scores supported the researchers' original contention that students will have increased reading achievement, although, the post-test scores indicated that there was limited growth in self-esteem. This perhaps shows that the correlation between self-esteem and reading achievement is limited or not even present. The use of self-esteem lessons, journals, and affirmations provided the necessary structure for the intervention activities. Participating in self-esteem lessons allowed the children to engage actively in the promotion of self-esteem.

Previously, self-esteem was not taught using a set curriculum at the targeted schools. Teachers used their own discretion as to how to approach this subject within their own classrooms. Also, teachers did not assess self-esteem and reading motivation in the same manner. In addition, parental involvement may or may not have been solicited on this subject.

Students and parents reflected a better understanding of the need for emphasizing self-esteem because of the intervention. Teachers observed a more honest attitude and awareness through written and verbal affirmations by both students and parents. The following comments appeared on parent post-surveys.

"She now knows that reading is entertaining and informative."

"My son is completely confident and independent, he doesn't shy away from reading anything.

"...breezes through first and second grade materials."

"The light bulb went on!"

In addition to the written comments, many verbal affirmations were expressed within the classroom by students. At the same time, the teacher researchers also observed that the targeted children became more familiar with the concept of self-esteem and other terminology that went along with it. A student commented, "I take risks now when I read!" Others have voiced their enthusiasm for a character in a book whose self-esteem is positive.

It was exciting to observe the students become active participants in their discovery of themselves. The children enjoyed the activities and were anxious to talk about themselves. Journal writing was anticipated and students were enthusiastic about reviewing past entries. Researchers noticed that there was a transfer of self-esteem concepts in the children's everyday activities. Journal writing became an opportunity to strengthen writing skills and reduce apprehensive feelings towards writing. The students were able to communicate their feelings through self-reflections, both written and oral. The children became more comfortable with expressing their thoughts as a result of this process. In addition, they became more accepting of each other's uniqueness.

On the other hand, the implementation of the self-esteem lessons, journaling and daily affirmations created difficulties with scheduling and time consumption. Often daily oral affirmations became group discussions, opposed to individual comments, in order to be more time efficient.

For educators desiring to implement a self-esteem program such as the researchers' intervention, it is recommended that extra time and commitment be made available for the

implementation. As always, when adding to the current curriculum, something must be replaced in order to thoroughly cover the material. Students do buy into the program with enthusiasm. Teachers need to make parents aware of their role in self-esteem program. True communication between parent and teacher needs to exist. Assessment at the beginning of the year is difficult to honestly depict the self-esteem and reading capabilities due to the newness and anxieties associated with the beginning of a new school year. Perhaps beginning assessment at a later date would provide more accurate measures.

Despite the small gains in self-esteem post-test scores, the researchers feel that the self-esteem lessons, journal writing, and affirmations provided a positive learning environment and experience which will benefit each child in his/her future. This was a worthwhile program to implement despite the results of the intervention. The researchers suggest a consistent and extensive self-esteem program to make a full impact on children's self-esteem. The benefits of this intervention cannot be fully appreciated by simply analyzing the surveys and test results.

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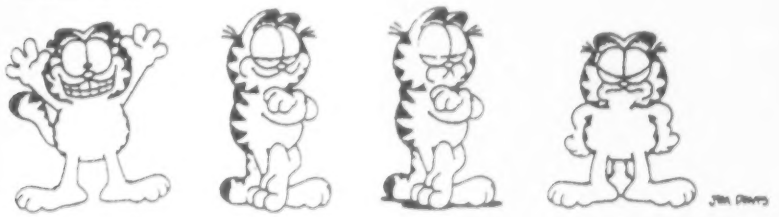
Appendices

Appendix A

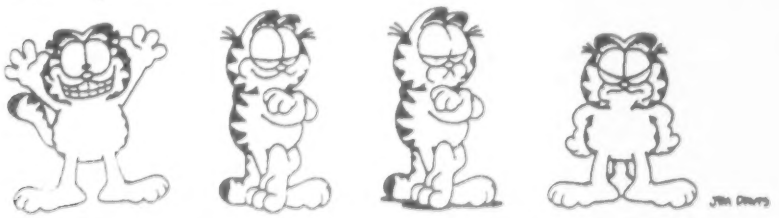
Elementary Attitude Survey

School _____ Grade _____ Name _____

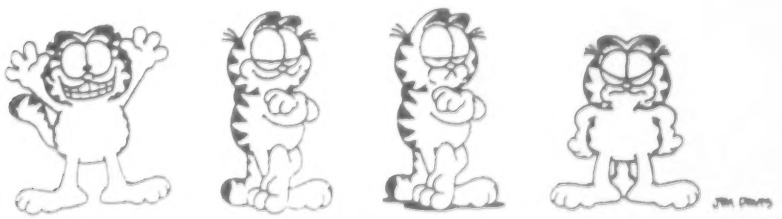
1. How do you feel when you read a book on a rainy Saturday?



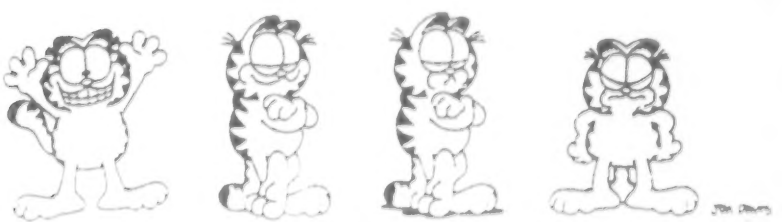
2. How do you feel when you read a book in a school during free time?



3. How do you feel about reading for fun at home?



4. How do you feel about getting a book for a present?



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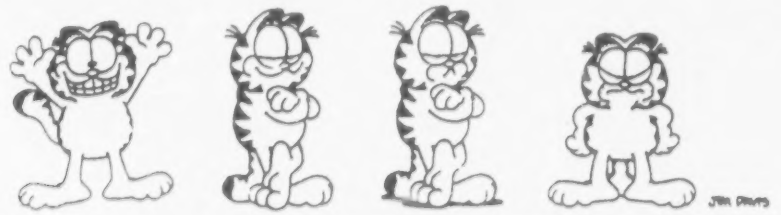
Appendix A

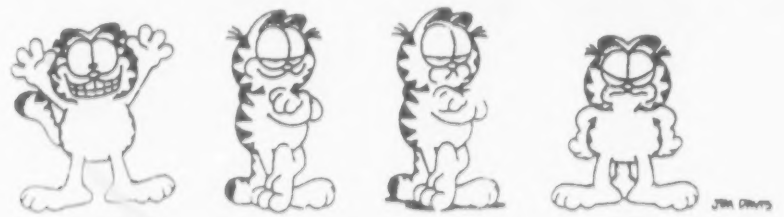
Elementary Attitude Survey

5. How do you feel about spending free time reading?

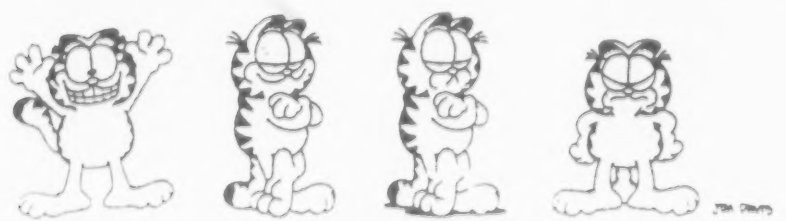
6. How do you feel about starting a new book?



7. How do you feel about reading during summer?



8. How do you feel about reading instead of playing?



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Appendix A

Elementary Attitude Survey

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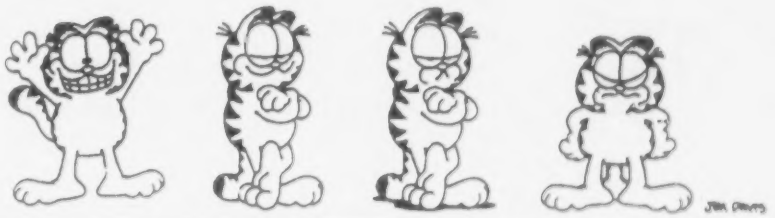
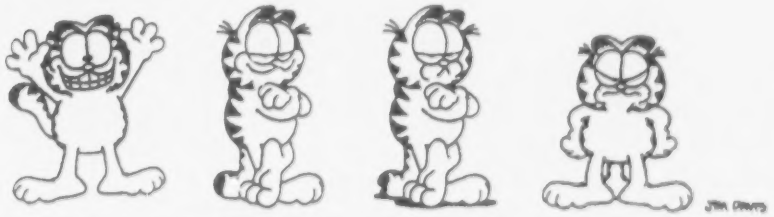
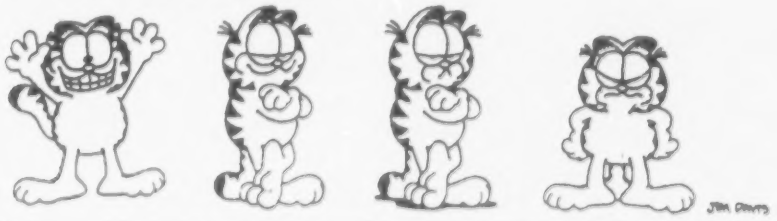
9. How do you feel about going to a bookstore?



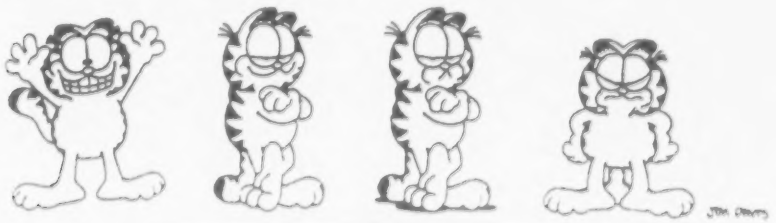
10. How do you feel about reading different kinds of books?



11. How do you feel when the teacher asks you questions about what you read?



12. How do you feel about doing reading workbook pages and worksheets?



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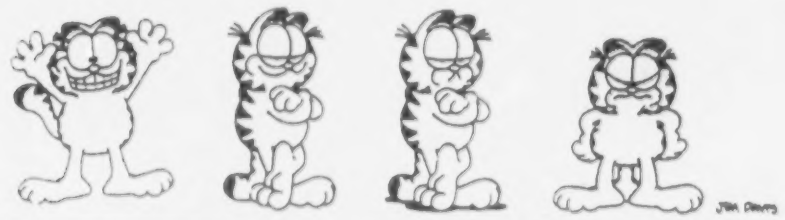
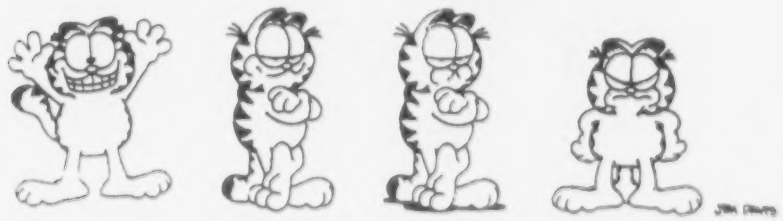
Appendix A

Elementary Attitude Survey

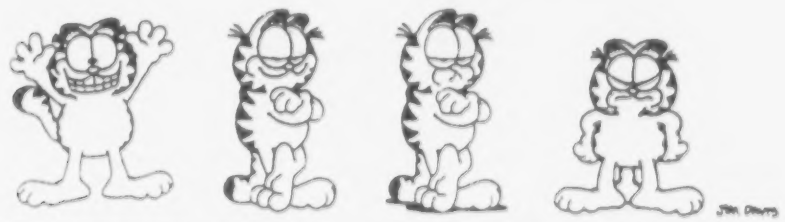
13. How do you feel about reading in school?



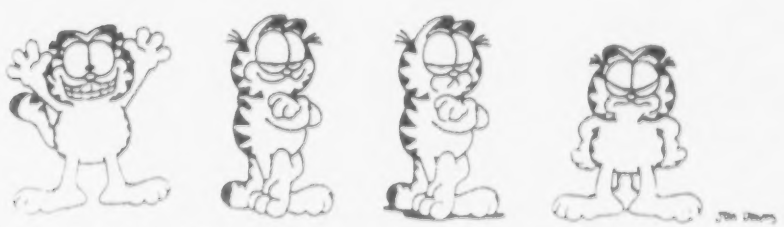
14. How do you feel about reading your school books?



15. How do you feel about learning from a book?



16. How do you feel when it's time for reading in class?



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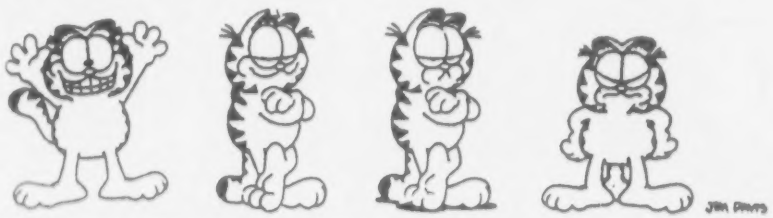
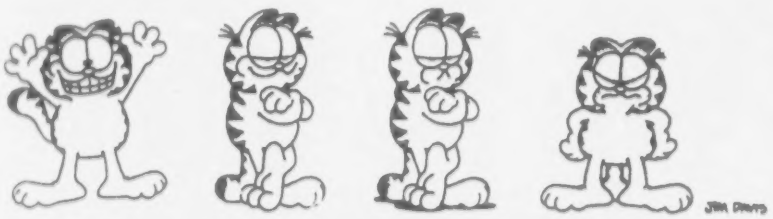
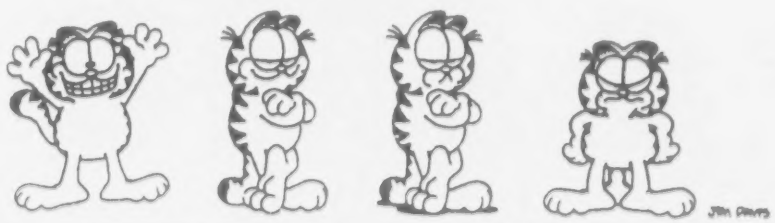
17. How do you feel about the stories you read in reading class?



18. How do you feel when you read out loud in class?



19. How do you feel about using a dictionary?



20. How do you feel about taking a reading test?

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Appendix A
Elementary Attitude Survey

Student Name _____

Teacher _____

Grade _____ _____ Administration Date _____

Scoring Guide

4 points	Happiest Garfield
3 points	Slightly smiling Garfield
2 points	Mildly upset Garfield
1 point	Very upset Garfield

Recreational reading	Academic reading
1. _____	11. _____
2. _____	12. _____
3. _____	13. _____
4. _____	14. _____
5. _____	15. _____
6. _____	16. _____
7. _____	17. _____
8. _____	18. _____
9. _____	19. _____
10. _____	20. _____
Raw score: _____	Raw score: _____

Total raw score (Recreational + Academic): _____

	Percentile Ranks
Recreational	
Academic	
Full scale	

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Appendix B
First Grade Reading Assessment

go	can	come	down
me	blue	said	jump
to	in	play	yellow
see	look	and	make
big	too	two	here
red	it	for	funny
we	one	help	little
is	run	not	away
up	find	three	where
my	the	you	

Name		
S	P	M
A	O	B
D	I	V
U	F	C
G	Y	N
T	H	X
J	R	Q
E	K	Z
L	W	

Name		
s	p	m
a	o	b
d	i	v
u	f	c
g	y	n
t	h	x
j	r	q
e	k	z
l	w	

Sound		
s	p	m
a	o	b
d	i	v
u	f	c
g	y	n
t	h	x
j	r	q
e	k	z
l	w	

Appendix C

Brigance Basic Skills Reading Comprehension Test

A

DIRECTIONS: Read the story below. Then answer each question about the story by circling the letter of the best answer.

Dr. Cruz is a different kind of doctor. She works in a hospital, but she does not take care of people. Dr. Cruz takes care of pets in an animal hospital.

Sometimes Dr. Cruz takes care of animals at the zoo. Her patients at the zoo are bears, lions, monkeys, and tigers.

Dr. Cruz helps sick pets get well. She even sees pets that are not sick. Her job is to help keep animals healthy.

1. Dr. Cruz works in a
   a. school
   b. store
   c. forest
   d. hospital
2. Dr. Cruz takes care of
   a. children
   b. animals
   c. rocks
   d. doctors
3. When Dr. Cruz works at the zoo
   a. she takes care of bears and other animals
   b. she paints the animal cages
   c. she feeds peanuts to the monkeys
   d. she buys balloons
4. A **healthy** animal is
   a. large
   b. well
   c. sick
   d. hungry
5. This story is mostly about
   a. animals at the zoo
   b. sick animals
   c. an animal doctor
   d. an animal hospital

B

DIRECTIONS: Read the story below. Then answer each question about the story by circling the letter of the best answer.

This was not the first time Hans had gone mountain climbing. He and his friend Jake had enjoyed mountain climbing many times before.

Jake was a strong, quick climber. Hans was a good climber, too, but he began to get tired. He could not keep up with Jake.

As Hans hurried to catch up, he slipped on a rock. Hans began sliding toward the cliff, but Jake caught him before he slid over the edge.

1. Jake was
   a. a tired, slow climber
   b. a lazy, mean friend
   c. a strong, quick climber
   d. angry with Hans
2. Why couldn't Hans keep up with Jake?
   a. Hans stopped to eat lunch.
   b. Hans was a poor climber.
   c. Hans had a stone in his shoe.
   d. Hans began to get tired.
3. To **hurry** means
   a. to go quickly
   b. to go slowly
   c. to stop
   d. to grow larger
4. What happened first?
   a. Hans slipped on a rock.
   b. Hans hurried to catch up with Jake.
   c. Hans began sliding over the edge of the cliff.
   d. Jake caught Hans.
5. What stopped Hans from sliding over the edge of the cliff?
   a. Hans held on to a branch.
   b. Hans held on to a rock.
   c. Jake caught Hans.
   d. Hans crawled into a hole.

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Appendix C

Brigance Basic Skills Reading Comprehension Test

A

DIRECTIONS [illegible] the story below. Then answer each question about the story by circling the letter of the best answer.

When Jed was walking in the woods, he heard a strange noise. "Could it be a bear?" thought Jed as he looked around. Jed was afraid of bears.

Jed heard the noise again. This time Jed was not afraid because he saw the animal that had made the noise. The animal was not a bear.

Jed saw a squirrel jumping from tree to tree. The squirrel was making nuts fall from the branches.

1. Where was Jed?
   a. Jed was [illegible]
   b. Jed was [illegible]
   c. Jed was [illegible]
2. What happened first?
   a. Jed saw [illegible]
   b. Jed stopped and looked around
   c. Jed heard a strange noise
3. What did Jed think made the noise?
   a. a bird
   b. a cat
   c. a bear
4. A **noise** is something you can
   a. hear
   b. see
   c. eat
5. What was [illegible] Jed saw from the [illegible]?
   a. [illegible]
   b. a bear
   c. a bird

B

DIRECTIONS Read the story below. Then answer each question about the story by circling the letter of the best answer.

Dad said, "You know that we cannot get a dog for Beth. This house is too little for an animal. We can have a pet when we move to a bigger house."

Scott knew his dad was right. Scott had wanted to get a dog for his sister. Tomorrow would be her birthday.

Scott thought of another surprise. He would get a toy dog for Beth. Dad couldn't say "no" to that kind of a pet.

1. At first, what did Scott want to get for Beth?
   a. He wanted to get her a toy.
   b. He wanted to get her a dog.
   c. He wanted to get her a doll house.
2. Why did Dad say they couldn't get a dog?
   a. The pet would eat too much.
   b. Scott's dad didn't like pets.
   c. The house was too little.
3. Why did Scott want to get a dog for Beth?
   a. Beth was sad.
   b. Tomorrow would be her birthday.
   c. Beth asked Scott to get her a surprise.
4. Another word for **pet** is
   a. animal.
   b. house.
   c. birthday.
5. A good name for this story would be
   a. Moving to a New House.
   b. Scott's Birthday Party.
   c. Thinking of a Surprise for Beth.

Reading Comprehension

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Appendix D
Self-Concept Scale

Self-Concept Scale

Student's Name_____ **Date**_____

1. I am a happy person.	yes	no
2. I am smart.	yes	no
3. I am well behaved in school.	yes	no
4. I have good ideas.	yes	no
5. I am an important member of my family.	yes	no
6. I am good in my school work.	yes	no
7. I am an important member of my class.	yes	no
8. My friends like my ideas.	yes	no
9. I am obedient at home.	yes	no
10. I like being the way I am.	yes	no
11. I often volunteer in school.	yes	no
12. My classmates in school think I have good ideas.	yes	no
13. I have many friends.	yes	no
14. I am a leader in games and sports.	yes	no
15. I am a good reader.	yes	no
16. I like my brother (sister.)	yes	no
17. I can be trusted.	yes	no
18. I am a good person.	yes	no

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Appendix E

Parent Observation Guide

QUESTIONS TO GUIDE READING CONFERENCES

Name of Student _____ Date _____

1. What does this student know about reading and what can he/she do as a reader?

2. How confident and independent is this student as a reader?

3. What opportunities and experiences is the classroom providing that strengthen this student's development as a reader?

4. What books or resources are strengthening this student's reading development?

5. What experiences and/or teaching will help move this student along in reading?

Appendix E

Parent Observation Guide

MY CHILD AS A LEARNER
Observation Guide for Parents (Primary)

Name _____ Date _____

Grade _____

Indicate your observation of your child's learning in the following areas. Please comment where appropriate.

		Yes/No	Comment
1.	MY CHILD LIKES TO LISTEN TO ME READ TO HIM/HER.		
2.	MY CHILD LIKES TO READ TO ME.		
3.	MY CHILD TRIES TO READ IN EVERYDAY SITUATIONS (STREET SIGNS, CEREAL BOXES, STORE SIGNS).		
4.	IT IS CLEAR FROM THE WAY HE/SHE TALKS THAT A BOOK BOOK HAS BEEN UNDERSTOOD.		
5.	MY CHILD TRIES TO FIGURE OUT NEW WORDS FOR HIM/HERSELF WHEN READING.		
6.	MY CHILD SOMETIMES GUESSES AT WORDS BUT THEY USUALLY MAKE SENSE.		
7.	MY CHILD SOMETIMES CHOOSES TO WRITE.		
8.	MY CHILD LIKES TO TALK ABOUT & SHARE WHAT WAS WRITTEN.		
9.	MY CHILD VOLUNTARILY TRIES OUT NEW WORDS OR FORMS OF WRITING.		

COMMENTS OR QUESTIONS:

Anthony, R., Johnson, T., Mickelson, N., Preece, A. In Press
EVALUATION: A PERSPECTIVE FOR CHANGE

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Appendix F
Self-Esteem Journal

SELF-ESTEEM DAILY JOURNAL STATEMENTS

1. Tell me something you are looking forward to in school this year.
2. My favorite part of summer was...
3. My favorite part of the school day is...
4. The best part of the school week was...
5. I am best at...
6. When I grow up I want to be...
7. After school I...
8. I am sure glad I...
9. I like me because...
10. People like to watch me...
11. Another thing that I am good at...
12. Something I can do all by myself...
13. I am glad I learned to...
14. I like showing my talent because...
15. My family loves me because...
16. I like to go _____ with my family...
17. In my house I help to...
18. My favorite room in the house is...
19. My family is special because...
20. My family likes to...
21. Families are the same because...
22. Families are different because...
23. My family makes me feel...
24. My favorite family memory was...

Appendix F
Self-Esteem Journal

25. I like to read to someone in my family because...
26. I thought the book I read was...
27. I like reading books to _____ because...
28. I like to read books that are...
29. I am a good reader because...
30. I choose my friends because...
31. Friends like to...
32. I was a friend to someone when...
33. Someone who makes me feel happy is...
34. Once someone helped me by...
35. Friends are...
36. I am a good friend because...
37. I can tell someone likes me when...
38. I make new friends by...
39. Some of my friends' names are...
40. Someone I would like to be friends with is...
41. My friends think I am good at...
42. I am a good friend when...
43. I like having friends because...
44. What have you done to make someone feel better?
45. A team is...
46. Teams are important because...
47. How are you a team player?
48. I like being on a team because...
49. Teams are fun because...
50. My teacher helps me...
51. I help others...

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Appendix F
Self-Esteem Journal

52. I can do _____ alone, but I need others to...
53. I like people who...
54. My group is great because...
55. I put _____ on my puzzle piece because...
56. I like working with a buddy because...
57. My class helps me...
58. I like reading with...
59. My favorite thing to do with my classmates is...
60. This year I have learned...
61. I am a better reader because...
62. I am better at _____ because...
63. Today I am going to try...
64. I like learning about...
65. I feel happy when...
66. I am proud of myself because...
67. Every day I look forward to...
68. I am a good reader because...
69. My classmates like me because...

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Appendix G
Daily Oral Affirmations

SELF-ESTEEM DAILY AFFIRMATIONS

WEEK 1: I am special because...

WEEK 2: Today I learned...

WEEK 3: I like me because...

WEEK 4: I love my family because...

WEEK 5: My family loves me because...

WEEK 6: Reading is...

WEEK 7: I am a good friend because...

WEEK 8: My favorite thing to do with a friend is...

WEEK 9: Friends are important because...

WEEK 10: Say something nice to someone in your group.

WEEK 11: I contribute to my group by...

WEEK 12: We are good at...

WEEK 13: Name rap (Feldman, p. 41)

WEEK 14: I feel good when...

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